

THE



DIAL

JUNE 1925

PERSEPHONE IN EDEN

BY S. FOSTER DAMON

(SCENE: *Spring hills descending to the sea.*)

(Enter DEMETER and PERSEPHONE.)

DEMETER

Beloved daughter, now that the sun's fire  
is most mightily upon us,  
let us endure his love beneath  
the kind arms of this pine-tree,  
and let me answer a little  
your questions yet unfolded,  
since already you can walk  
apart from my shadow,  
and I know that soon you shall wander  
far from my voice's ache.  
Listen, while I repeat  
words which you may remember,  
for here is the place of truth  
half drowsy upon the pure needles,  
and now is the time, now that the sun's fire  
is most mightily upon us.

For it was on such a noon  
half singing, half sleeping,  
that once I lay naked  
bathing in the high tide of light,  
when a ray, bursting through the sun,  
like a serpent lapped and encircled me,

## PERSEPHONE IN EDEN

till the love—then centred within me—  
 coiled warm within my heart.  
 Then all my members fed it  
 abundantly with their forces,  
 and all my soul fed it  
 with yet dearer abundance.  
 For what had been without  
 now was my own, within;  
 what had been universal  
 was now given me, mine.  
 Great thought of joy at first,  
 grown greater, even to terror,  
 till here on the hills just above the ocean,  
 you unfolded from me,  
 split from my heart in anguish  
 —the exquisite form given  
 to that ancient act of joy.

## PERSEPHONE

These are new words: have patience, O my mother.  
 Why should we ever wander from this pine-tree?

## DEMETER

Dear child, look forth and tell me what you see.

## PERSEPHONE

Among the level branches glares the sun.  
 He alone hurts the eyes. Should I fear him?

## DEMETER

He is your father; yet his gifts are dangerous.

## PERSEPHONE

And below his face steadily march the clouds.

## DEMETER

Trust them; but fear all voices from the air.

## PERSEPHONE

How far they are walking over the immense sea!

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DEMETER

Beware the sea; beware the sea, my daughter.  
We are not of it; it is alien to us.  
Many a youth, wearying of happiness,  
has leapt to the monsters of that lower world;  
many a maiden, wandering by the seaside,  
has cried once, and vanished, leaving but a trail  
of flowers to show the hidden way she has passed.

PERSEPHONE

Easily from the sea the earth surges  
into hills and peaks now faint in the hot hour.  
I lie upon it; here within my reach,  
beneath my outstretched hand, lean many flowers.

DEMETER

You will not heed—yet thrice, thrice beware the flowers!  
The sun, the sea, the air: these things are large,  
and when they strike, strike boldly; but the flowers  
seem without guile, seem made wholly of love.  
And they are love, and they are yours. For all is yours.  
But among them lurk flowers of no different hue  
which distil pain from thorns delicate as hair,  
which hide keen poison in their open hearts.  
These are the tenderest things, which strike most deeply.  
Yet they are very few; the most are harmless,  
being but little joys made visible.  
Enjoy them; but learn to spare them, for should you break  
a single stem, thinking to possess  
the flower wholly, then you lose the flower  
and lose yourself—even so much of yourself.  
Be ruled, and leave the flowers their own lives.

PERSEPHONE

I shall obey, although I do not understand.

DEMETER

There is more that I might tell you,  
but you could not understand;  
there is more that I cannot tell you,

## PERSEPHONE IN EDEN

since there are no words for these things.  
 If I say that the sun is your father, I am not wrong;  
 and if I say he is not your father, I am right.  
 But of such matters you need not question,  
 for my answers are not answers to you.  
 (I myself—how can I know whether stars  
     clustered and became a rose,  
 or whether the rose gave birth  
     to a stream of stars?)

It is enough that the once happy girl  
     who owned all, with no thought of owning,  
 became a woman lost within her own labyrinth.  
 I am that lonely woman, who has found peace.  
 It is enough that I have escaped  
     from the walls of my flesh  
 by projecting you forth. Yet I am not content;  
 for you (although you cannot know it) are not myself,  
 and I am not sure that I have opened  
     the right gates for you.  
 The land is strange; you yourself must explore it.  
 Do you understand in part? If so, I may sleep.

## PERSEPHONE

These flowers—how should I understand?—  
 They spring from the earth, which is our fixed abode.

## DEMETER

The earth has subterranean fires which may burst forth.

## PERSEPHONE

Mother! Is nothing sure in all this world?

## DEMETER

Even the stars may fall and become lightnings;  
 such do not ever return to the old order.

## PERSEPHONE

Are theirs the dangerous voices in the air?



## DEMETER

At times I think it; but all that we can know  
is that some people hear a voice which calls them  
by name; and then they vanish, not to return.  
Our lives and deaths are written in our names.

## PERSEPHONE

But why should we change? You have not changed,  
except as you have gathered strength and knowledge.  
I am like you in every way but that.  
The same light streams from my hands as from yours.

## DEMETER

Ask me no more; the sacred hour is passing.  
Not that again may I know the embrace,  
    for it was not here, but in another land.  
Not that again ever may I bathe  
    in full waves and cross-currents of fire.  
And now I must either wake or sleep,  
    must speak or else keep silent;  
moreover, I know that my words  
    change themselves in your ear.  
Ask me no more: I am impatient of questions.  
This is the hour of commemoration,  
when I rest in my cave from the ecstasy  
    wrapped round with ancient dream.  
Ask me no more; hinder me no longer.  
Go ask of the locusts whirring in yonder laurel.  
Look in the eyes of the air; overcome his timidity.  
Henceforth such voices shall be clearer than mine.  
Ah, daughter! I can give shoes to these tender feet;  
I cannot make paths to unroll before them.  
That is one sorrow which follows after joy.  
Ask me no more: I am weary of the world.

*(Demeter departs.)*

## PERSEPHONE

Now she is gone; I am alone with the world.

## PERSEPHONE IN EDEN

All is mine—how can it ever change!  
 The sun has moved a space across the sky;  
 and of his bright love, from my feet is born  
 a little huddle of shapeless shadow  
 that clings to my skirts like a tiny child;  
 but as my father descends,  
 so will my shadow grow large and shapely.

It is hot; let me lie by this pool  
 and cool my wrists in the pure water.  
 My shadow has lain down beside me;  
 he sets his lips where I set mine.  
 Ah! shadow! Do you admire the other companion  
 whose haloed head regards me from another world?  
 She is I!

How many of me are there?  
 My mother, my shadow, my reflection—  
 I radiate myself in all directions!  
 I can grasp my mother, can touch  
 my shadow, can but see my reflection  
 (for I cannot part the veils of water).  
 Where else am I?  
 Do you suppose that in the ocean  
 there is another nymph, my double,  
 who will always swim beside me?

How many of me are there  
 too subtle even for sight?

*(Mermaids rise from the ocean.)*

## MERMAIDS

From the cool depth to the warm height,  
 Up—up—we soar to the light,  
 And open our arms where the sun burns white.

While we float high in his pure pyre,  
 There runs from our hair and our hair's attire  
 The liquid crystal intense with fire,

On our arms full of the sea-laurel  
With oozy petals, and huge auroral  
Pearls, and the vein-like purple coral.

In the swift lace of a foam-kirtle  
She rises through waters strangely fertile  
With the flickering green of the leaves of the myrtle.

Now the long lines of the ripples bear her  
Toward the pines of the shore, near and nearer;  
Or is she drawn by the face in her mirror?

And the shell grounds on the firm land  
With a curved wash spreading over the sand.  
She stirs at the silence and drops her hand.

## APHRODITE

These billows of the shore, frozen, caught  
in white hills and hanging curves crested with green  
are not the blue, moving waves crowned with white;  
yet I may step without fear from world to world  
for I am sovereign, and all worlds are the same.

*(She steps from her shell and lifts the mirror again.)*

But I will behold only myself, for none other is worth  
beholding.

The sun, in love with his own beauty, created the ocean for  
his glass;

now I, their child, surpass the parents.

You nymphs and dryads, poor copies of myself,  
gaze not at me, glowing from the dangerous salt.

You shall not look, I say!

See, I cover myself with this long hair,  
the radiation of my beauty;

I hide my face behind my mirror.

Yet why should I be foolish, as though from shame?

I will not be coy; there is none here to admire sufficiently.

Slaves! fulfil my commands, and in your turn

you shall enslave all, from warrior to smith.  
I will not be coy: you brothers, the winds,  
never done playfully wrestling in each other's arms,  
you shall admire, till you stop your play in wonder.  
See: I hide no longer in the banner of my beauty.

Gaze into the double violets of my eyes,  
breathe deeply the light wild-roses of my breasts;  
—yet I shall not tell all—no, not for you!—  
There is another flower—the rarest—that none may know,  
which blooms only at twilight in secret places;  
its very name shall be hidden.

One alone may gather it. He is not here.

Where is he? oh, where is he?

Guiding his dappled horse with his knees,  
brandishing the dangerous, broad-headed spear,  
thrusting it fiercely into the underbrush  
down at the wallowing boar.

Foolish boy! oh, foolish boy!

You do not know what the notes of your horn  
are summoning toward you through the forest.  
I come with the echo, down the long, dim glades,  
a star gliding toward you, past green clouds of leaves.

Tragic boy! oh, tragic boy!

He thinks to hunt the boar; but he hunts me.

I am the one cut through by the keen steel;  
I die in his arms as he plucks it out by the hilt,  
and desperate, tries to staunch the bitter blood.

Ha, ha! How I shall baffle him!

For as he whines over the empty body,  
already I shall have come again, in another form,  
drying the tears of his heart.

Then I will be a little kind

and lay my hand for a moment

upon the shoulders heaving with anguish.

O cool hand! Poor boy, look up: it is I.

I have brought you a little water in my palm.

Be rested; do not stir; I am with you.

—But I will not stay, for he must not possess me then,  
me the rare, the terrible!

Where is he? oh, where is he?  
He shall come instantly! I will not be so defied!  
I hear his horn: not yet has he found the boar.  
Out of the way! Let none follow me!  
But gather each a flower from my footprints  
in memory of this honour,  
for you may never behold me again.

## A DRYAD

Strange goddess, there is no path through the forest.  
The slender feet will be defiled and cut.  
These buskins, then, girded with silver to the knee;  
this tunic to protect the delicate flanks from briar-spikes.

## APHRODITE

Be it so; though you disguise me  
as that odd sister of mine, Artemis,  
who is already staring at us, round-faced and red  
across the dunes. But he shall be the more delighted  
when he knows how I have baffled him!  
—And you? Are you a dryad, girl, staring with eyes  
wide as the nostrils of a poised doe?  
If you wish to be of my train, I may not forbid it.

## PERSEPHONE

I only wondered to see you play so with flowers  
and give them as gifts, when some may be dangerous.

## APHRODITE

Now by my mother the sea! I am minded, girl, to curse you  
for this insolence! this contempt of my liberal gifts!  
Ha! why, the girl is a fool! She shall never follow me!  
Listen, girl, do you see any of the train turn yellow or blue?  
Have they wrinkles, do they groan, do they fall to the ground  
and die?  
Your eyes are big enough to see with!

Am I one to give dangerous gifts?  
Now I determine henceforth to wear nothing but flowers,  
to weave them into elaborate robes, fresh each dawn.  
Why, girl, have you never listened to what they whisper?  
Can such children be dangerous?  
—Come, I waste the hour!  
Into the forest! Let them follow who will!

*(Aphrodite and the others depart.)*

PERSEPHONE

Like a breeze, she has vanished among the glades with those  
who met her.  
The others have plunged to their homes under the sea.  
Only a few circles remain on the water;  
huge blossoms vibrating in the sunset.  
There are armfuls of flowers trodden into the sand.  
The west itself is a sultry flower of scarlet;  
the east is an enormous blue blossom with white stamens.  
And as the cool tide of the night rises round me,  
I see the light from my hands grow clearer.  
I touch this tree—terror!—beneath the bark  
a thrill runs through it; the tree blossoms.  
How can I escape flowers springing at my touch?  
Land and sea—sky and sky—  
I am caught up between petals!  
The universe blooms.

Surely my mother was wrong. If flowers poison,  
who could be happy when under our very tread  
rise roses, crocuses, violets curled in the deep grass,  
lilies, hyacinths, the frail-spiring larkspur?  
The sea itself is a living meadow of blue  
where, all day long, white flowers climbed the rocks.

My mother has forgotten; else she herself  
would wear them, and discard those dry  
ears of wheat which she binds upon her temples.  
Yet I shall obey her, shall not gather one,  
but I will lie down here upon this bank

and listen to hear them whispering in the dusk.  
Ah! sisters! sisters! how soft are your bosoms!  
Your little faces look over into my eyes  
and press light kisses all along my arms.

## VOICES OF FLOWERS

Why should we not love you,  
you who are our dream?

## PERSEPHONE

You have thought of me already? How is this?

## THE FLOWERS

For long the earth has slumbered  
In the blue cave of space;  
And we are the thoughts unnumbered  
Wherewith her slumbers teem;  
But as we pore upon your face  
We see the dreams' dream.

For you are our perfection;  
We gaze with all our eyes  
Upon our resurrection;  
Nothing can be above you  
In fire, earth, seas, or skies.  
Ah, how should we not love you?

## PERSEPHONE

Your song is sweet in my lips.  
It drowns me with perfume.  
I could lie here for ever  
in this tiny forest of twilight colour,  
hearing the breezes sway  
the tall grasses above me.

A SINGLE VOICE (*dimly*)

The perfume is a dream.

## PERSEPHONE

Perfume drifts across the low moon.

## PERSEPHONE IN EDEN

THE VOICE (*from the air*)  
The dream shall speak—

PERSEPHONE  
The moon reflects the red of the dead sun.

THE VOICE (*yet more clearly*)  
—words you would not hear,—

PERSEPHONE  
The moon is blurred.

THE VOICE  
—yet shall hear unresisting.

THE FLOWERS (*in a soft chord*)  
Persephone, Persephone!  
Lie closer to our bosoms  
and you shall be the eternal  
singing of the blossoms.

THE VOICE (*a youth's*)  
The song clings.

PERSEPHONE  
Who is there?  
Drowsily I hear  
a clear voice ringing  
within the air.

THE VOICE  
I am yourself,  
your voice radiated and returned  
that you may learn of your own beauty.

PERSEPHONE  
My voice never caused so deep an echo.

THE VOICE (*caressingly*)  
Persephone! Persephone! O syllables of love!



## PERSEPHONE

Who are you, calling upon me so gently?

## THE VOICE

I am one who walks among flowers  
in the cool of dusk,  
for this is my garden.

## PERSEPHONE

A third time: who are you?

THE VOICE (*fading away*)

I have told you twice.  
I know your name, Persephone,  
but as yet you have not learned mine.

## PERSEPHONE

Hark: it was the languid trees, stirring their arms heavy with  
leaves;  
they have sighed in the heat, yet without breaking the shrill  
trill of the crickets.  
A richer air is poured round me. I am uneasy.  
Till now, everything seemed final with itself,  
the sufficient, perfect expression of its essence;  
but now I do not understand these things no longer mine.  
Are they masks, through which voices speak?  
doors that open and shut, letting gusts of music through?  
There is a humming beneath the hush of the sea, the throb of  
the crickets,  
as though harps, long playing, have come nearer.  
I have strayed upon a festival, and do not know the tongue;  
all things speak to each other, but ignore me.  
I am too small now, for them to fear,  
and they are concerned with preparation for the tremendous  
dance  
outside the translucent walls of the world that bar me in.

I have forgotten what I have been.

Oh, I can hear the music, and the laughter drifting above it!

## PERSEPHONE IN EDEN

Shall I, too, not adorn myself for the festival?  
The guest is not yet arrived; I still have time.  
Ah, the heat! the drums! I shiver. Was it here that I lay  
upon flowers?

## THE FLOWERS

Still we guard the print of your body,  
Persephone, elder sister!

## PERSEPHONE

I have not harmed you, then?  
Crushed not one back to death?  
No drop of hate in a single chalice?

## THE FLOWERS

Poison, when we have kissed her?  
O breath of the palace of night!  
How we adore you, adore you!  
Take us: we are your delight;  
Tear us, petal from intricate petal,  
For what are we before you?

## PERSEPHONE

Is it true, then? Do you really love me so  
that I may break you from the lucid stem  
and place your little cages of light and sweetness  
at my breast, in my hair?

## THE FLOWERS

Do we not offer ourselves?  
Are we complete  
If vainly we cast ourselves  
Before your feet?

## PERSEPHONE

What are you, that you run after me everywhere?

## THE FLOWERS

We burst the seed as the bird breaks through the shell:  
then timidly at first, scarcely believing the bliss,

we uncoil our delight upward toward the sun,  
climbing, building, erecting—  
unfurling green wings to bear us higher—  
drinking our different draughts of the pure light—  
until at the climax of our flight, we explode into colours,  
and impressing fiery kisses upon the air, we die.  
Take us, Persephone; now is the moment!  
Our sweetness is made complete, gathered to your sweetness.  
You will lift us nearer the heavens than our highest spires;  
calmly upon your brow we dare face divinity.

## PERSEPHONE

They throw themselves before me—they cling to my knees—  
from the banks they hold up their hands full of beauty—  
a starry vine drops from a tree, to tangle its fingers in my  
hair—  
they tease like children to be caught up into my lap.  
I laugh at the innocent snare!—This one, then;  
and this one, and this—

## THE FLOWERS

We are accepted, accepted!

## PERSEPHONE

Gentle tendrils, twine you along my arms;  
these single blossoms, hide not wholly my small breasts;  
about my brow, these cool leaves as well.

## THE FLOWERS

Persephone, now we may whisper you our sole secret:  
we are but the writing of your name, your name;  
for only so does the dumb earth speak.

## PERSEPHONE

My name? O lovely, innumerable syllables!  
Brow, arms, breast, and girdle are filled:  
still there are others, and yet clusters of others!  
—But what is this one, most exuberant above the pool?  
Tremendous plant with a thousand blossoms,  
in your quivering, all heaven and earth has its laughter!

—Oh, sudden silence!—  
 I am awed before your secluded power.  
 The sharpness of your spikes has split the stones.  
 I will part your strong shoots and gaze  
 into your many elaborate suns—  
 —Mother!—Was that my face—?  
 my eyes—among the innumerable blossoms—

*(She swoons; a shower of meteors falls like an autumnal rush of leaves into the ocean. The roar increases; the earth breaks beneath the plant; and the aged form of Dis issues cowering from the cleft.)*

### Dis

Again the heavens, sagging low with poised stars,  
 each suspended, waiting, ready to leap on the outcast,  
 circling slowly, like the spears of the fishers over the pool.

*(He threatens the heavens with his bident.)*

My curse! the blackest, reiterated curse that this rusty throat  
 can hurl upward through the heavy air against you—  
 you!—tyrant! comfortable tyrant! coward of the star-bolt!  
 I am bitter of stealing out by night, in strange disguises!  
 Behold me, me! my feet planted firm on the roof of hell.  
 And some night shall you wake suddenly, to hear my armies  
 storming the airy ways, conquering the constellations,  
 once more to reassert the grandeur of my word.  
 Then shall I thrust you in turn under the floating stars  
 and reassume the throne that was mine before the dawn.  
 Can you hear me?

Contemptuous silence! They bide their time.

Was it just, was it kind, O thunderer, to cut clear from your  
 realm  
 each fear, each ache of pain, each throttling thirst,  
 and crushing them into a ball, to toss them carelessly away  
 that they might struggle together, interlocked as a globe,  
 drifting alone, flaring across the frigid void?  
 So this earth whirls on through space, exuding its anguish.  
 The terrible cold has crusted it into a semblance of calm.

*(He  
 is star*

But though cut from the fire without, it is scorched by fire  
within:

the writhing vapour, frozen on the surface, crystallizes  
into bright patterns which delight your distant eye;  
the smoke of the torment is subtilized across the empty spaces  
to a rare incense, sweet within your nostrils.  
Thus is the whole of pleasure, the delight, selfishly yours;  
mine the unendurable desires—those many guests are my  
court.

And I myself! I once Titan! Eldest of gods! What am  
I now?

Bleached by the darkness; pithed—pithed by the bolt;  
only the shell of my ancient, enormous splendour;  
myself dethroned in my own skull;  
I, the Central Sun, all my rays ripped from me;  
a black, still flame, trembling with mute anguish,  
beaten back, walled up,  
through ages indefinite with slow blur of years.

O despair, utter despair!

How long have I brooded, speechless, on the dim throne,  
wearily ordering the unordered:  
the despairs, the fears, the insatiable hungers—  
crazy hordes of flaming ghosts—  
my many subjects, each mad with his own nature!  
Now the flames spring fernlike on the rocky walls;  
now a huge geyser of fire spouts through the solid pavement,  
then suddenly vanishes in the midst of its roar;  
now a dull glow drifts by—mere dust of fire in the air.  
These things I order, I order; but when, by tremendous effort,  
the darkness is filled with precise ranks of the flames,  
and I hold them tight in the power of my will,  
suddenly they dissolve, sifting like sand  
through the fingers of my determination.  
I impose my will, yet they guess nothing of me,  
and all begins again.

*(He sees Persephone, who has risen slowly from her swoon, and  
is staring at him, fascinated.)*

O despair, despair increased!

Are you a form sent to taunt me with exquisiteness?  
to torture me with want? . . .

Flower-robed goddess, content to behold perfection in a mirror,  
I do not know your name;  
should you turn your light toward me, then I would know it.  
—Turn not your eyes upon my hideousness,  
but go, go—!

PERSEPHONE

You have called me by name, O marvellous youth with fiery  
hair.

How terribly you lean upon your bow!

I dare not come at your command: is your warmth kindly?  
Yet my feet come. Be merciful!

Dis

Divinity with blazing hair that rages to your feet,  
the night is blackest behind you:

it surrounds you with a great halo of dark light.

Out of that depth have you come to me  
complete and yet incomplete.

The revelation tempts my profoundest need;  
for man who beholds divinity must possess it  
or become beast. Have pity upon my darkness!

PERSEPHONE

The dim trees are silent, piled thunder;  
glimmering among their boughs are the seeds of lightning.  
But you, winged youth—through the blackness  
you open a pavilion of fire for me:

the gate of the sun, my father's own palace.

The air shudders round you with a million thrilling rays,  
which are hardly visible, yet the night boils with them.

Beneath those searching rays, the bud within my breast  
breaks open, splits itself to the very centre.

Have pity upon me: lend me a little warmth!

Dis

Lend me a little light! Ah, should you come

(Slo  
hand  
brok

bringing your loveliness into my underworld  
—your rays undimmed, unmixed in my domain—  
we would have splendour which the heavens do not hold.  
Have mercy, radiant one, upon my strength,  
and tempt it not to the death that must surely follow!

## PERSEPHONE

Your glorious notes shake me with utter promise.  
Have mercy, radiant one, upon my weakness!

## DIS

My choked words are unworthy of your ears.  
Darkness is loneliness. Dare you light my darkness?

## PERSEPHONE

How would you speak, should you ever cease your singing!  
Why honour me from among my many sisters?  
They stand around me; I am ugly among them.  
My feet are caught like white roots in the deep turf;  
their nervous veins pulse with sweet moisture;  
my knees are tense; my whole body  
sways in the wind of your rays;  
my hands lift slowly as leaves;  
and my breast is glowing, a hard-opened blossom—  
the petals strain backward to reveal the exuberant heart.  
I bend my head over it, I try to shadow it with my hair,  
but the hot sweetness, the terrible shaking of the air,  
renders me powerless, will let me conceal nothing.  
Take me—take me, before the petals unhinge and  
flutter apart to the dust—take me, or I shall  
be shattered with my own fragility  
when you look away.  
Lay your hand upon me; gather me—  
break me from the past—now—your strength—  
relief—even though you drop me beneath  
your feet, I shall kiss the terrible tread!—

*(Slowly they have drawn together. Dis puts out a trembling hand, almost as if to urge her back. At his touch, the spell is broken. Attendants dash from the cloven rock with a chariot, to*

*which he bears her. She sees his real form, and tries to escape; but he holds her too firmly. The horses are lashed furiously; they disappear into the earth; and the cleft closes.)*

PERSEPHONE'S VOICE (*dying into distance*)  
Mother! Mother! Mother!

DEMETER (*rushing out into the night*)  
Persephone! Persephone!—The fatal trail of flowers!—  
Daughter! Daughter! Daughter!

Oh, that now I could think of her as nothing dearer or stranger  
than a shadow which always had clung by my side  
now suddenly broken loose into flight, disappearing among  
the dunes!

Grief! grief! grief: that the sorrow should balance its joy;  
that every moment of happiness through years  
should return as bitterness, all in one moment!

If there is justice to be found  
above the clouds or beneath the graves,  
then will I seek it out and demand it.  
Now shall my feet tread all  
the bitter ridges of the world  
to reach the most remote gates,  
which I shall weary with my knocking,  
—pleading for news of her  
who I know is lost for too long.

Not till the sea is reaped  
of its centuries of harvest—  
not till the ocean tombs  
at last release their dead,  
shall my daughter again cling beneath my arm.

My sandals and my staff!  
What is the way through the dark  
to the palace of the sun?

(*She stumbles out.*)





DANCERS. BY E. E. CUMMINGS

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## A LETTER FROM MADAME EMILIE TESTE

BY PAUL VALERY

*Translated From the French by Lewis Galantière*

DEAR Sir and Friend: I thank you for your parcel and for the letter you wrote to M Teste. I believe that the pineapple and the jam were not unwelcome; I am sure that the cigars brought pleasure. As for the letter, I should be telling an untruth if I said anything at all about it. I read it to my husband, and I scarcely understood it. Nevertheless, I confess that it delighted me. It does not bore me to hear things abstract or too lofty for me; I find in them an almost musical enchantment. There is a beautiful part of the soul which is able to enjoy without understanding, and that part is great in me.

As I say, I read your letter aloud to M Teste. He listened to it without showing what he thought, or that he might have been thinking at all. You know that he reads almost nothing with his eyes, putting them to strange, as it were *internal*, use. That is not what I mean. I mean individual use. But that is not it at all. I do not know how to express myself. Let us say a use at once *internal*, *individual*, and *universal*. His eyes are very beautiful. I love them for being a little greater than all that is visible. One never knows if anything whatever escapes them; or if, on the contrary, the world is not for them a simple detail in what they see, a *flying insect* which can obsess one, but which does not exist. From the time I married your friend, I have been unable to be certain of his gaze. The very object it fixes is perhaps the object which his mind desires to reduce to nothingness.

Our life continues as you saw it: mine insignificant and useful, his composed of habits and absences. This is not to say that he does not awake and reappear, when it suits him, terribly alive. I like him very much this way. Of a sudden he is great and dreadful. The machinery of his monotonous acts bursts, his face sparkles, he says things which often I only half comprehend, but which

are never thereafter effaced from my memory. But I want to hide nothing from you, or nearly nothing: *sometimes he is very hard*. I do not believe anybody can be as hard as he. He breaks your spirit with a word, and I seem to myself a spoiled vase discarded by the potter. He is as hard as an angel. He has no idea of his strength. He speaks unexpected words which are too true, which annihilate people, wake them out of complete stupidity face to face with themselves, caught at being what they are, at living silliness. We live at our ease, each in his absurdity like fish in water, and we never perceive except by accident all the stupidities contained in the system of life of a reasonable person. We never think that what we think hides from us what we are. I hope, Sir, that we are worth more than all our thoughts, and that our greatest merit before God will be to have tried to stop at something more solid than the babblings (even admirable) of our mind with itself.

As a matter of fact, M Teste does not need to speak in order to bring those about him back to humility and to an almost animal simplicity. His existence seems to cripple all others, and even his manias stimulate reflection.

But do not imagine him to be always difficult or overwhelming. If you but knew how different he can be! Of course, he is hard occasionally; but at other times he is graced by an exquisite and surprising sweetness that seems to descend from the skies. His smile is a mysterious and irresistible offering, and his rare tenderness is a winter rose. At the same time, it is impossible to foretell either his gentleness or his violence. It is futile to look for rigour or favour from him. By his profound distraction and by the impenetrable progression of his thoughts, he eludes those ordinary calculations which human beings make about the character of their kind. My forethought, my deference, my thoughtlessness, my discrepancies—I never know what they will draw from M Teste. But I confess to you that nothing attaches me more to him than this uncertainty of his moods. After all, I am very happy not to understand him too well, not to foresee each day, each night, each coming moment of my passage on earth. My soul has more thirst for astonishment than for all else. Expectation, risk, a little doubt, exalt it and vivify it much more than the possession of certainty might do. I am afraid this is not right, but, though I reproach myself, this is the way I am. I have confessed more than

once that I thought I preferred believing in God to seeing Him in all His glory, and I have been reprimanded. My confessor tells me this is foolishness rather than sin.

Forgive me for writing to you about my poor self when you wish only to have news of him who interests you so vitally. But I am a little more than the witness to his life; I am part of it, one of its organs, though not essential. Husband and wife as we are, marriage has harmonized our actions, and our temporal necessities are fairly well adjusted, despite the immense and indefinable difference of our minds. I am therefore obliged to speak incidentally of her who speaks to you of him. Is it not perhaps difficult for you to imagine my situation with M Teste, and how I contrive to pass my days in the intimacy of a man so original, at once so close to and so far from him?

Women of my age, my real or apparent friends, are greatly surprised to see me, who seem so fitted for an existence like their own—(and a rather pleasing woman, not unworthy of a simple and comprehensible lot)—accept a position which they cannot in the least imagine in the life of a man whose reputation for queer-ness shocks and scandalizes them. They do not know that the slightest softening of my spouse is a thousand times more precious than all the caresses of theirs. What is this love of theirs which is all sameness and repetition, which has long since lost all quality of the unexpected, the unknown, the impossible; all those things which charge with meaning, with danger, with power, the slightest glance or stroke; which make of the substance of a voice the unique food of the soul; and which, finally, cause all things to be more beautiful, more significant, more luminous or more sinister, more futile or more remarkable, according to our presentiment of what is taking place in a changeable being who has become mysteriously essential to us?

You see, Sir, only those who do not know bliss desire it apart from anxiety. However naïve I may be, I am well aware of the loss entailed by pleasures which are tamed and broken in to domestic habits. The encounter of abandon and possession gains much, I believe, by a preparation of ignorance of its approach. This supreme certainty ought to spring out of a supreme uncertainty, and declare itself like the climax of a play whose movement and development, from tranquillity to the final threat of the event, we should find it difficult to trace.

Happily—or otherwise—I am for my part never certain of M Teste's feelings; and such certainty is of less importance to me than you would believe. Strangely married as I am, I am so consciously. I knew that great souls got married only by accident—or in order to have a warm nest where whatever pertains to woman in their system of life might be available, and always locked in. The sudden tender burst of a white shoulder between two thoughts is not a detestable sight! Men are like that; even profound ones.

I do not mean this for M Teste. He is so strange! In truth, one cannot say anything about him which will not be inexact at the moment of speech! . . . I think there is too much continuity in his ideas. He bewilders you at every step in a web which he alone knows how to weave, to break, to take up again. He prolongs within himself threads so fragile that they refrain from snapping only with the help and contrivance of all his vital power. He draws them across I know not what personal gulfs, and he dares to stray, no doubt, far out of ordinary time in some abyss of difficulty. I wonder what happens to him there? It is clear that one is no longer oneself under such constraint. Our humanity cannot follow us toward lights so far removed. Doubtless his soul becomes a singular plant whose roots—though not its leaves—grow contrary to nature toward the light!

Is not this to reach out of the world? Will he find life or death at the end of his attentive will? Will it be God, or some frightful sensation of encountering at the deepest depth of thought only the pale glimmer of his own and miserable matter?

One must have seen him in these excesses of absence in order to appreciate them! At such times, his physiognomy alters . . . disappears! A little more of this absorption and I am sure that he would render himself invisible. . . .

But when he returns to me out of the depths! . . . He seems to be discovering me like a new earth! I appear before him unknown, new, essential. He seizes me blindly in his arms as if I were a rock of life and of real substance which this great incommunicable genius encountered, touched, clung to suddenly, after so many inhuman searchings, after what measureless recessions and what monstrous silences! He falls back upon me as if I were the earth itself. He awakes in me; he finds himself again in me. What happiness! His head is heavy on my face, and of all the

strength of his nerves I am the prey. His hands grow vigorous and frighteningly alive. I feel myself in the grip of a sculptor, a doctor, an assassin, under their precise and brutal actions; and I have the terrified sense of having fallen into the talons of an intellectual eagle. . . . Do you know what I really think? I imagine that he does not know exactly what he is doing, what he is kneading. . . .

All his being, which was concentrated upon a certain *place* at the frontiers of his consciousness, has just lost its ideal object, that object which exists and does not exist, for it depends only upon a little more or a little less intensity. All the energy of an entire great body was not too much to employ in order to hold up before the mind that diamond-like instant which is at once the idea, the thing, and the threshold and the end. . . . And so, when this extraordinary husband captures and in a way masters me, and imprints his strength upon me, I have an impression of being substituted for the object of his will that he has just lost. I am by way of being the plaything of a muscular knowledge. I tell you this as well as I am able. The truth he looked forward to has taken my form and my living resistance; and by an altogether ineffable transposition, his internal will passes and is discharged into his hard and determined hands. These are very difficult moments. But what am I to do? I take refuge in my heart, where I love him in the way I please.

As for his feelings about me, as for the opinion he may have of me, these are things about which I am ignorant, even as I am ignorant of every thing about him which is not visible or audible. A moment ago I told you my suppositions; but I do not really know in what thoughts or combinations he passes so many hours. For myself, I remain on the surface of life; I abandon myself to the thread of the days. I tell myself that I am the servant of that incomprehensible instant in which my marriage was almost automatically decided. A divine instant perhaps or a supernatural one?

I cannot say that I am loved. You should know that this word love, so uncertain in its ordinary sense, shifting between so many images, is entirely worthless when applied to the relations of my husband's heart and my person. His head is a sealed treasure, and I do not know if he has a heart. Do I ever know whether he recognizes me, loves me, or studies me? Or whether he studies



himself through me? You will understand that I do not labour this point. To sum up, I feel myself to be in his hands, in his thoughts, like an object that is for him now the most familiar and now the strangest in the world, according to which of his variable gazes adapts itself to me.

If I dared communicate to you my frequent impression, such as I have voiced it to myself and often confided it to the Abbé Mosson, I should say to you figuratively that I feel myself to be living and moving in a cage into which the superior mind *by its very existence* has enclosed me. His mind contains my own just as the mind of man envelops that of the child or the dog. Understand me clearly. At times I move about our house; I go, I come; the idea of singing seizes me and rises; I fly, dancing with improvised gaiety and unexhausted youth from one room to another. But however lively my dancing I never cease to feel the empire of this powerful absent man who is there in some armchair, dreaming, smoking, examining his hand, putting slowly into play all its joints. I never feel my soul to be limitless. But environed round. Enclosed. Heavens, but it is difficult to explain! . . . I do not mean *captive*. . . . I am free, but I am classified.

The thing in us which is most our own, most precious, is veiled from us as you know. It seems to me I should lose my being if I knew myself entirely. Well, for one person I am transparent; I am seen and foreseen just as I am, without mystery, without shadows, without possible recourse to my own unknown, to my own ignorance of myself!

I am a fly buzzing and living precariously in the universe of a steadfast gaze; sometimes seen, sometimes unseen, but never out of sight. I know at every moment that I exist in an attentiveness always vaster and more general than all my vigilance, always more prompt than my most sudden and promptest ideas. The greatest movements of my soul are little, insignificant events to him. And nevertheless, I have my infinity . . . which I feel. I cannot but recognize that it is contained in his own, and I cannot consent that this be so. It is an inexpressible thing, that I am able to think and act absolutely as I please without ever, *ever* a thought or a desire which is unexpected, important, or new to M Teste! . . . I assure you that so constant and so strange a sensation gives rise to very profound ideas. . . . I can say that my life displays to me at every hour a sensitive model of the



existence of man in divine thought. I have the personal experience of being in the sphere of a being as all souls are in *the Being*.

But alas, this same sensation of a presence from which one cannot escape and of a divination so intimate is not without inducing, at times, vile thoughts in me. I am tempted. I say to myself that this man is perhaps condemned, that I am greatly exposed in his vicinity, and that I live under the leaves of an evil tree. . . . But I perceive almost immediately that these specious reflections dissemble in themselves the peril against which they counsel me to be on my guard. I divine in their coils a clever suggestion to dream of another more pleasurable life, of other men. . . . And I am horrified at myself. I contemplate my destiny; I feel that it is as it should be; I say to myself that I *desire* my destiny, that I choose it anew at every moment; I hear internally the voice of M Teste, so clear and so deep, calling to me. . . . But if you knew by what names!

There is no woman on earth called by my names. You know what ridiculous names lovers exchange; what dog and parrot names are the natural fruits of carnal intimacies. The words of the heart are childish. The voices of the flesh are elementary. Indeed, M Teste considers that love consists in *being able to be beasts together*. A licence for silliness and bestiality! Therefore, he names me after his own fashion. Almost always, the name is related to what he wishes of me. His name of itself tells me in a word what I am to expect, or to do. When he desires nothing in particular he calls me *Being*, or *Thing*. And sometimes he calls me *Oasis* which pleases me greatly. But he never tells me I am stupid—which touches me deeply.

The Abbé, who has a great and charitable curiosity about my husband, and a sort of pitying sympathy for a mind so isolated, tells me frankly that M Teste inspires in him feelings very difficult to reconcile among themselves. He said to me the other day: "Your husband's faces are innumerable!"

He thinks him "a monster of isolation and of singular knowledge," and he explains this regretfully by a pride of those prides which cut you off from the living, and not only the present living, but the eternal living;—a pride which would be abominable and nearly satanic if this pride were not, in this too active soul, turned so sharply against itself, and did not know itself so exactly that the evil in it was as if withered at its origin.

"He holds himself frightfully aloof from good," said the Abbé to me, "but he holds himself fortunately aloof from evil. . . . There is in him I know not what frightening *purity*, some incontestable detachment, force, and light. I have never observed such an absence of restlessness and doubt in a very deeply plumbed intelligence. He is terribly calm! No uneasiness of soul, no internal shadows, are attributable to him—and nothing, indeed, which derives from the instincts of fear or covetousness. . . . But nothing oriented toward Charity.

"His heart is a desert island. All the breadth, all the energy of his mind surround and defend it against the truth. He flatters himself that he is entirely alone. . . . Patience, dear lady. Perhaps he will find one day a footprint in the sand. What happy and saintly terror, what salutary horror, when he learns, through this pure vestige of grace, that his island is mysteriously inhabited!"

Then I told the Abbé that my husband made me think very often of a Godless mystic. . . .

"What light!" said the Abbé. "What light do women draw at times from the simplicity of their impressions and the uncertainty of their language." But immediately after, and to himself, he replied: "A Godless mystic! Luminous nonsense. Too easily said! False clarity. . . . A Godless mystic, Madame; but there is no conceivable movement without a direction and a meaning, without an end somewhere. . . . A Godless mystic! . . . Why not a hippogriff, a centaur!"

"Why not a sphinx, Abbé?"

He is, in fact, christianly grateful to M Teste for the freedom which permits me to practise my faith and to give myself up to my piety. I have every licence to love God and to serve Him, and I can share myself happily between my Lord and my dear spouse. Sometimes M Teste asks me to tell him of my orisons, to explain to him as precisely as I can how I go about it, how I apply myself and sustain myself, and he wants to know if I lose myself in them as truly as I believe I do. But scarcely have I commenced to hunt for words in my memory when he outstrips me, interrogates himself, and, putting himself prodigiously in my place, tells me such things about my prayer, gives me such details, that they clarify it and seem to unite with it at its secret altitude;

—and communicate to me the frame of mind and the desire for it! There is in his language I know not what power of making visible and audible that which is most deeply hidden in us. And yet, his words are human words, nothing else than human; they are only the very intimate forms of faith reconstituted by artifice, and marvellously articulated by a mind incomparable for daring and profundity. One would say he had dispassionately explored the fervent soul. But from this recomposition of my burning heart and of its faith, the essence, *hope*, is terribly absent. There is not a grain of hope in all the substance of M Teste; and this is why I feel a certain uneasiness in the exercise of his power.

I have not much more to tell you to-day. I offer no excuse for having written at such length, since you asked me to do it saying that you were insatiably avid for all the facts and gestures of your friend. Still, I must end this. The hour of our daily walk has come. I shall put on my hat. We will go quietly through the narrow, twisted, cobble-stoned little streets of this ancient town that you know slightly. We shall arrive finally where you would love to go if you were here, at that antique garden where all those who reflect, who have cares, who soliloquize, descend toward evening, as the water flows to the river, and of necessity meet. There are the learned, the lovers, the old men, the disabused, and the priests, all the possible *absent* beings of all kinds. One would say they were hunting their mutual recessions. They must love to look at each other without knowing each other, and their separate bitternesses are accustomed to meet, each ruminating about the others! One drags his illness, another is hurried by his anguish; these are shadows which fly from each other, but there is no other place to fly from others than this, to which the same idea of solitude draws invincibly each of these absorbed beings. We shall soon reach a place worthy of the dead. It is a sort of botanical ruin. We will be there a little before twilight. See us walking with short steps, given over to the sun, the cypress trees, the bird cries. The wind is cold in the sun; the sky, too beautiful, grips my heart at times. The hidden cathedral sounds. Here and there are round, elevated fountains which come up to my waist. They are filled to the brink with a black, impenetrable water on which float the enormous leaves of the *Nymphaea Nelumbo*; and the drops which stray on these leaves roll and gleam like mercury. M Teste lets himself be distracted by these great, living drops, or he moves

slowly between the flower-beds with their green labels in which the specimens of the vegetable kingdom are more or less cultivated. He enjoys this rather ridiculous trimness and amuses himself by spelling out the baroque names:

*Antirrhinum Siculum*  
*Solanum Warscewiczii!!!*

And this *Sisymbriifolium*, what a jargon! . . . And the *Vulgare*, and the *Asper*, and the *Palustris*, and the *Sinuata*, and the *Flexuosum*, and the *Praealtum!!!*

"It is a garden of epithets," he said the other day; "a dictionary and cemetery garden. . . ." And after a moment he said to himself: "Learnedly to die. . . . *Transiit classificando.*"

Believe me, Sir, with all our thanks and good wishes,

EMILIE TESTE

## A SONNET

BY CUTHBERT WRIGHT

Dear boy of the untroubled, dream-like face,  
 Soft hued and evanescent as a cloud,  
 The lovely livery of a virgin grace  
 You bear unspotted thro' the brawling crowd.  
 I think in coming years if I could know  
 What starry love your innocence endowed,  
 Not half so sadly would I watch you go,  
 A moonbeam thro' the concourse, dark and loud.

Now I will never see you more or know;  
 Only a few white stars are left in heaven;  
 Under their shining immortality  
 Like darkling ships our separate souls are driven.  
 Yet as you passed, a fragrance came to me  
 Of happy fields where wistful flowers blow.



*Courtesy of Scott and Fowles*  
ACROBAT. BY ELIE NADELMAN





*Courtesy of Scott and Fowles*

**PIANIST. BY ELIE NADELMAN**







*Courtesy of Scott and Fowles*

TANGO. BY ELIE NADELMAN

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## JOHN KEATS

BY CONRAD AIKEN

IT is perhaps idle to ask whether there is sufficient warrant for another life of Keats.<sup>1</sup> One may question whether even for Sir Sidney Colvin's *Life* there was much necessity—his excellent monograph in the *English Men of Letters* series would be, if brought up to date in certain minor particulars, all that one needs. Miss Lowell pleads, of course, for her *John Keats*, the excuse of new material. But this new material amounts, quantitatively and qualitatively, to very little. One is glad to have the rest of the Dawlish poem for the further faint light it sheds on the "bawdy" side of Keats; one is glad of the Gripus fragment, which very slightly extends one's knowledge of his dramatic gifts; and the letter to Woodhouse is important in its bearing on the *Hyperion* problem, though in a sense opposite to that which Miss Lowell intends. The other things—the other few fragments of verse, the Brawne and Taylor letters—are useful, certainly, but I cannot think they excuse a biography of thirteen hundred pages. A pamphlet might have been made of them, with perhaps an essay; it would have been enough. For the fact is that in the letters of Keats—in many respects the most vivid and living of letters—we possess a portrait which no biographer, writing after the event, can match. In those letters is far the greater part of our knowledge of him—a biographer must, with embarrassing frequency, either paraphrase them or quote them. He cannot possibly create a substitute for them. At most, he can hope to supplement them with a collection of other contemporary material.

This much Miss Lowell has done with enormous industry and patience; and for this reason her *Life of Keats* must be—at any rate until this collateral material has been put to better use—indispensable. She covers the ground of Keats's brief life extraordinarily. No scrap of information is considered too uninteresting for introduction, or too trivial as a basis for speculation; she attempts to accompany Keats like the ticking of a clock; to know

<sup>1</sup> *John Keats*, by Amy Lowell (illus., 8vo, 1160 pages; Houghton Mifflin: \$10).

of his whereabouts and preoccupations at every second. If Miss Lowell had a genius for biography the result might have justified this. But she is as far from having such a genius as she is—and this perhaps is worse—from being a good critic. Her biography becomes, therefore, a triumph of engineering, a miracle of dimensions; like the Great Wall of China, or the largest potato at the Fair. It contains a stupefying mass of information more or less co-ordinated; but the order thus given is mechanical rather than aesthetic.

To be summary, I think Miss Lowell signally fails in what might be called the "finer" departments (as against the mere collating of facts) of biography. She has little tact; her taste is uncertain; her sense of proportion is uncertain; her psychological perceptions are imprecise; her imagination is forced and hectic, not instinctively apposite. There are many admirable and graphic pages in her John Keats. She makes also many admirable points. But on the whole the effect is one of provincialism, a pervading unripeness which no amount of cocksureness and bluster can cover. Miss Lowell is unfortunate (to begin with) in her prose. If her *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* appeared to be written by a popular lecturer to women's clubs—breezy, careless, and superficial—her John Keats is in this regard little better. Her style is abominable—it is scarcely a style at all. It is dishevelled and inaccurate—it is monotonous and awkward. It has energy, but its energy is given little direction, little beauty of rhythm or colour. It is a prose so uniformly undistinguished and so frequently amateurish as to put grievously in question the quality of the mind it expresses and the use to which that mind has been put. Let me quote a few examples, which will show in various ways what I mean.

"But give Keats half a chance and he could not help learning, he learnt so fast that he outlearnt his teacher in a short time, but that is only to say that Keats was a genius and Hunt was not."

"Keats was writing on September twenty-first, nine weeks before, on July eighteenth, Jane Austen had died at Winchester."

"Indeed, the moment, whether through accident or design, was fortuitous, for the moon lacked but twenty-four hours of being at the full."

"But Brown was unaccustomed to considering his own health, which never wanted consideration, and probably, also, he believed Keats's statement that his throat was 'in a fair way of getting well,' this he told Tom next day, but such indeed was not the case."

"The lover's words are not what they should be, any one can see that; but Endymion suddenly finding his empty uplifted arms clasped about a naked waist is a beautiful flight of imagination, astringently absorbingly expressed."

"The poem will not be denied, to refuse to write it would be a greater torture. It tears its way out of the brain, splintering and breaking its passage, and leaves that organ in the state of a jelly-fish when the task is done."

What, one is moved to ask, is the state of a jelly-fish when the task is done? And how seriously can one take a writer who twice uses "fortuitous" when she means fortunate and "jejeune" when she means young? This inaccuracy of speech parallels Miss Lowell's inaccuracy of thought. She has a passion for glib generalization. Her book is "exhaustive" in the sense that it marshals vividly all the available facts, but it is not exhaustive in the sense of being a judicious study of them. Her judgement is highly capricious: as a guide and interpreter she takes many unwarrantable liberties with the probabilities. Her book is full of ingenuous speculation and naïve argument: argument with scant premise and speculation with little aim. She cannot be trusted—she must be watched. She is dangerous, too, because, though unreliable, she is positive, and carries herself with such bravado.

## II

It would be difficult to write an uninteresting life of Keats, and in this, in spite of her stupendous prolixity, Miss Lowell has not succeeded. Even when stretched to thirteen hundred pages, Keats's brief and tragic story remains the most moving, the most harrowing of literary histories. No other poet has given to posterity so brilliant and living a self-portrait as Keats left in his letters. From his "I will be as punctual as the bee to the clover" in 1816 to his "I always made an awkward bow" in 1820—the four years of adolescent maturity which were all the life he had

—we see his entrance, his agony, and his exit, with a vividness that is terrifying. This is not only because his correspondence was voluminous—others in this have surpassed him—nor only because his genius went as much into his letters as into his poetry. His genius *did* go into his letters, and in certain particulars a part of it (his speculative freedom, his critical sureness, his extravagance of humour, and his sharp sense of character) which never found much place in his poetry. But more important than this is the fact that Keats was the possessor of a devouring self-consciousness, a passionate and exquisite absorption in his own relation to things. Many of the problems—we must remember—which have occupied Keats's critics and biographers could never have arisen if the letters had never been published: for if the Keats of the letters is more "interesting" than the Keats of the poems, he is also more vulnerable. Arnold's essay is largely devoted to proving that Keats is not so entirely "unmanly" as the Brawne letters indicate; Swinburne complained of them that "even a manly sort of boy will not howl and snivel after this fashion"; Mr William Watson reiterated the charge of Cockneyism and vulgarity, "Apollo with an unmistakable dash of 'Arry." Miss Lowell, more idolatrous or less critical, denies flatly both the unmanliness and the vulgarity. The vulgarity, she maintains (except for one phrase in *Isabella*) does not exist: and the unmanliness was not intrinsic, but a weakness due to ill health and misfortune.

This generosity does credit to Miss Lowell's heart, but as criticism (whether of life or letters) it is, I think, valueless. The vulgarity and unmanliness are not characteristics to be shuddered at or concealed, or excused: they are highly significant features of Keats's genius, and ought to be studied with every care. To begin with, it has not been pointed out that the "vulgarity" and "unmanliness" are essentially the same thing. The vulgarities of *Endymion*, and of *Isabella* ("slippery blisses," "darling essence," "dainties made to still an infant's cries," "moist kisses," "creamy breast," et cetera) exactly parallel the unmanlinesses of the letters to Fanny Brawne (i. e., the extravagances of feeling). The fault, in both cases, is the fault of excess—the "fine excess" without the fineness; in both cases, the excess is erotic. Superficially, we may say this is due to Keats's habit of passionate and conscious abandonment to sensation. This habit we can attribute partly to the inheritance of an unusually vivid sexual nature from his mother,

and partly (I think we are safe in assuming this) to an unusually intense erotic relationship between the mother and son. It has been suggested that Mrs Keats was a nymphomaniac. Allowing for exaggeration, there is sufficient evidence, on the one hand, that she was sensual, if not immoral, and on the other that John Keats was her favourite child, and was "spoiled" by her. The characteristics of the maturing Keats are precisely those we should expect of a passionate and sensitive boy who had been, in early childhood, too much fondled and excited and indulged: he is voluptuous, vain, and self-willed; he has an inordinate craving for admiration and love; his sensibility is exceptional; he expects the world to give him his way and worship him; and when thwarted, he disproportionately and uncontrolledly suffers. In conflict with a deeply-rooted habit of sensuous self-indulgence was Keats's first-rate intelligence, with its growing scepticism; and, also, a very acute sense of having taken a step upward, socially, from his parents, and a desire to square his behaviour with more "refined" standards. He undoubtedly felt that his past, his origins, must be "lived down"—it is worth noting that nowhere, in all his letters, is there any mention of his childhood, and only one slight reference to his mother. That he disliked any one whom he felt to be socially superior (Shelley, for example) was noted by Haydon. That he suffered from references to his livery-stable origin was noted by Hunt. But living down his past meant also living down his mother; and in the hidden conflict over this point (and in his mother's alternating attraction and repulsion for him—it must be remembered that he was intensely loyal) I think we can detect one source of much that is weakest in him. Emotionally, he remained after Mrs Keats's death dependent on her—he was never destined to escape. It was her influence (more than Hunt's) that led to the excesses of *Endymion*; and it was Fanny Brawne's inadequacy as a substitute for her that led to the abject implorings and yearnings of the love-letters.

That Keats had sought an escape from this situation in sexual promiscuity is clear. He contracted syphilis, and this aspect of his life Miss Lowell discusses with candour and good sense. As regards his promiscuity, however, she is not so honest. She remarks with characteristic assurance: "We may say, with something like certainty, that we know everything he did; for which reason, it is safe to assume that what we do not know of, he did



not do." To this she adds that although fond of "broad speaking," he was not personally addicted to the "making of mud-pies." The assertion that we "know everything he did" is, of course, meaningless. Up to the end of his twenty-first year, we know practically nothing either of his daily life or of his preoccupations. From that time till his death—four years—we have his letters, and the notes of his friends; but there are many gaps; and, as Miss Lowell herself says elsewhere, there is good reason to suppose that many letters were lost. We know a *little*, in other words, of the last four years of Keats's life, but it would be folly to assume that we know all. As regards his sexual adventures, it is scarcely likely that he would have mentioned them in letters, or, if he had, that the letters would have been preserved unexpurgated. In the letters extant, however, there is enough evidence, for one who can read between the lines, that Keats and his companions were normally and joyously, even coarsely, promiscuous. In the case of Keats himself, it may indeed have been something more than this—I am inclined to think that it was an obsession. He remarked, on one occasion, that his feeling for women was not "*healthy*." He disliked and scorned them, when encountered merely socially, but nevertheless "*every bit of riband*" interested him. He was restless, incapable of finding happiness with any one woman, but nevertheless under a compulsion to seek it; and his extraordinary behaviour to Fanny Brawne suggests the alternation of hate and desire we should expect, and also that, once having possessed her, he might have found her repellent. Further, if Keats was secretive in his letters about his love for Fanny Brawne, he was presumably secretive about other episodes as well. This, of course, is "negative" evidence. On the positive side, there are the two calm references to what was unquestionably syphilis in letters to Bailey and Dilke, a year apart. (This must have added greatly to the tragic conflict of his feelings for Fanny Brawne, and may have had a bearing on his concealment of his engagement from his brother George and on the delay of the marriage.) Aside from this, we have the two or three "bawdy" poems (it is suggestive that the Dawlish poem has been suppressed hitherto<sup>1</sup>) and specific

<sup>1</sup> I suggest that Keats's literary remains may have been more "edited" than we have supposed. Why, for example, has the complete memoir by Brown never been published?



reference to an affair at Hastings, the very phrasing of which is illuminating; he "*warmed with her*" and "kissed her." He goes on to remark that this mysterious lady of Hastings, and Georgiana (his sister-in-law, to whom he is writing!) are the only women for whom he has "*no libidinous thought*." This is not the language of an ascetic. It is the language of the John Keats whose early poetry was full of toyings, of gentle squeezes, of the "tasting" of faces, of "Pleasure's nipple" and "milky sovereignties." It is the language of the Keats who enjoyed jokes about "More feet for little stockings," "*Amo amas I loved a lass*," and the frankly (and delightfully) bawdy poem of Dawlish. In short, there is no escape from the fact that Keats was highly sensual, and that he probably lived quite as uncontrolledly in this regard as in others. Haydon reports that he was once drunk for six weeks. Miss Lowell chooses to disbelieve this, but admits that at one time he was in the habit of taking laudanum. The general picture is incontrovertibly that of a young man who was at the mercy of his appetites, and who lived up to his plea of "O for a life of sensations rather than thoughts!"

It may be considered that I am stressing too much these psychological and physiological factors. I think, however, it is only by keeping them very clearly in mind that we can arrive at anything like an adequate understanding of Keats. Miss Lowell follows previous biographers in attempting to attribute the "unmanliness" and allied weaknesses of Keats to "external" factors. Going further than Arnold, who merely exonerated him, she declares him to have been strong, to have had great decision of character; and his breakdown, she argues, was simply the result of an unparalleled series of misfortunes. Briefly, these misfortunes were: the death of his mother in 1810, when he was fifteen; the emigration of his brother George to America, and the death of his brother Tom, in 1818; the indifference of the public to his first book *Poems* in 1817, and the hostility of the critics to *Endymion* in 1818; financial difficulties owing to the trusteeship of his inheritance; and finally, his breakdown with consumption, and death, while in love with Fanny Brawne, in 1821. These misfortunes, it will be noticed, were distributed over a period of ten years. They are misfortunes, certainly, but on the whole not such as the normal young man cannot and does not meet with stoicism—it

is worth remembering that Keats's sister Fanny and brother George faced similar difficulties, and apparently with equanimity. The truth is, these misfortunes are not very far from the normal human lot; and the so-called "tragedy" of Keats has been exaggerated, and indeed *became* a tragedy, largely because Keats himself helplessly exaggerated it. The departure of his brother George to America was the sort of thing which any brother expects—families do not remain together for ever. The financial difficulties did not greatly disturb Keats, or disturb him for very long at a time. He was young and confident; borrowed as cheerfully as he lent, and his publishers were extremely generous to him with advances. Moreover, there is another side to the picture. It must not be lost sight of that Keats had in many respects a phenomenally rapid and lucky rise from social darkness to a secure position among the leading men of his time. Even before he had reached his majority, he found himself surrounded by a group of admirers, all of them mature and brilliant men. Through Leigh Hunt and Cowden Clarke he was in a position to meet practically anybody whom he cared to. At the very outset of his career he encountered, on more or less equal terms, though himself much younger, Shelley, Wordsworth, Lamb, Hazlitt, and Coleridge. Furthermore, in Reynolds, Clarke, Haydon, Dilke, Woodhouse, Bailey, and Charles Brown (not to mention Hunt, whom he partially dropped) he possessed a circle of outspoken and enthusiastic admirers who were all intelligent men, who perceived his genius, and who helped him in every possible way. They copied his poems, handed his books about, mixed excellent advice with their praise, lent him money, and evidently (seeing him to be his own worst enemy) *conspired to make him and keep him happy*. There is scarcely another poet in the history of English literature who can have been so swiftly recognized and placed, or so handsomely encouraged by those whose help was in itself a clear validation of his genius.

### III

In the presence of these facts, I think any ascription of Keats's "unmanlinesses" to external misfortune breaks down. Is it not impossible to find, in the events of his life (unfortunate in some respects as it was) any "objective correlative" for his extraor-

dinary emotional instability, his loss of self-control, his abject self-pity and despair? The situation is analogous to that of Hamlet: we see him peculiarly unbalanced, unbalanced to the point of insanity; but we do not see on the surface any wholly adequate cause. We can, and should, add to the list of his misfortunes the fact that he acquired syphilis (a fact not usually stressed) for this may have contributed much to the poisoning of his relationship with Fanny Brawne. But even so, the "disturbance" remains so obviously disproportionate to apparent causes that we must seek the real reasons not in external but in internal factors. In short, we must say that these external factors were only able to undo him because he was weak. A Keats with great strength of will, great decision of character, such as Miss Lowell posits for him, will not "work." If we assume this, we are left with an enormous quantity of "behaviour" (and the poetry may here be included) which can only be regarded as "over-determined." Everywhere, in the smaller issues of Keats's life, we see that assumption belied. The *instability* of the Keats in the letters is striking. He is an emotional weathercock. He never knows his own mind or feelings for more than a day at a time. We do not need the word of Haydon for this—he tells us so himself. He is marvellously adept at self-analysis, but it is always *of the moment*—that is, in a particular state of feeling; and his passion for all its sensuous circumstance (heightening the description to the point at which it will be a direct and palpable *sensation*, or immediate experience, for his reader) inevitably led him to exaggerate. "I carry all matters"—he says apologizing to Bailey for a letter which had disturbed him—"to an extreme—so that when I have any little vexation it grows in five minutes into a theme for Sophocles." This is the Keats who at school was subject to paroxysms of weeping rage; who constantly gave way to fits of luxurious and indolent melancholy; who wrote insufferably patronizing letters to Taylor, his publisher, demanding money, and then followed with letters of a beautiful humility; who could frame a savagely conceited dedication for Endymion, and then substitute for it another, penetratingly self-censorious. This is also the Keats who could, and did, so repeatedly cry from one extreme to the other in his relations with his mistress. He imagined and desired her with a voluptuous obsession so con-

suming that he must go away from London in order to work; having gone away to work, he wrote her that his work had absorbed him, that he was hard-hearted, that work left no room in his mind for her, and that if he came to town he would not see her. He passed from an insanity of jealousy, gloatingly sensual in the extreme, to an abject humility of trust. During his illness, he constantly refused to see her, in order that he might not have to part from her. When he was in Italy, dying, he never once wrote to her—he could not bear to; his own feelings came first. As regards his work, his judgement was just as capricious and immoderate. It was seldom so much a judgement as a feeling. "Here lies one whose name was writ in water," he suggested for his epitaph; but he also said, not long before, "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death."

All of this, we see, is in one picture—the picture of one bewildered "by what is false within." It was a hierarchy of profound psychic schisms which ruled him, and it is scarcely to be wondered at, in the circumstances, that his fine mind was so seldom permitted to work uninterrupted, and that he regarded the poet as a "chameleon," without identity. In this psychotic instability the half-hate half-love of his mother was the dominant feature. He wanted still, and inordinately, to be loved. Society, taking her place, was to receive him with open arms—he was to be its darling, its god. It would cherish him and fondle him. When, however, society did no such thing, or when his friends betrayed in their admiration the least ambiguity, or when his mistress (who bore the same name as his mother, and who perhaps represented, for Keats, the negative pole of his mother's character—cold, hard, and chaste) flirted harmlessly with Brown, his sense of isolation and betrayal was morbid. He had, like the spoiled child, his secret tantrum; and then, with a grimness and tragic courage as excessive as the grief from which it was the reaction, he set himself to prove how cruelly he had been underestimated. Taylor said of him: "He does not bear the ill opinion of the world calmly." His own letters are full of an overweening pride, an assumption of greatness, which, in a character less lovable than Keats, would be repellent. The note of entire humbleness alternates with this, and completes our impression of a divided personality. A morbid feeling of inferiority fed, and

fought with, his burning ambition and self-confidence. Mr Watson is, therefore, right—without the “dash of 'Arry” Keats would not have been so much the “Apollo.” The livery stable played its part, as did his mother’s immorality. The fact that his mother married beneath her (his father was an ostler) was important also. . . . It is extraordinarily interesting to note that of his two “epics” one deals with the love of a goddess for a mortal, and the other with the dethronement of the “father,” Saturn. In an earlier hint of the Diana-Endymion theme, having described the nuptials of the unequal lovers, he asks “*Was there a poet born?*”—and Hyperion ends with the casting of Apollo into a celestial frenzy which will make him a god; it is Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, who arouses him to this paroxysm.

## IV

The Keats whose life was a feverish search for luxury as a replacement of his mother was also, of course, the Keats whose poetry is the most completely and consciously sensuous ever written. The erotic difficulty which rendered his life unstable, unhappy, and of a febrile intensity, made of his poetry the remarkable worship of sensuous delight (and linguistic substitute for it) which has been so often discussed. I have already noted the fact that the so-called vulgarities of Keats’s poetry are almost invariably sexual in character. Perhaps, as this was the focal point of the disturbance, it is only what we should expect; it is natural that over these, his strongest feelings, the victory of poetic “taste” should have been longest deferred. This becomes all the more reasonable an assumption when we recall that the primary aim of Keats, in all his poetry (as indeed in his letters) was to embody a sensation so completely, with so richly organized a tactilism, as to make the poetry approximate the vividness of a direct experience. This method, at the outset, might result only in a harmless and cloying prolixity, when it dealt with the natural luxuries of a summer’s day: but it led, when applied to erotic themes, to “slippery blisses” and “milky sovereignties.” In his maturer poetry (it was never to be wholly mature) these obsessions were still manifest enough, but the excitement they occasioned was better controlled, his taste improved; though even at the height of his powers, in *St Agnes*

Eve and Lamia, he was subject to serious lapses. Perhaps in time he would have learned to control this perfectly, for his taste developed with extraordinary rapidity. We see in his letters that it was joined to a critical faculty, and a sense of values, exceptionally keen. Keats might have become, among other things, a great critic.

The Keats who could think, however, and the Keats who could feel, remained peculiarly separate, and it is a point of great importance that the "growth" of Keats as a poet was not a growth in emotional power, or thought, or in any widening of view and sympathies, but a growth in *taste*. His genius being primarily for *luxury* (the finding of a verbal and prosodic equivalent for luxury of feeling) it became a question of discovering the right pitch of selection and control to give most richly the effect as of immediate sensation. In *Endymion*, this was prevented by the riot of rich images, and by excess in the image itself—he was undone by his "nectarous camel-draughts." The improvement in his later work is almost entirely due to a surer sense of effect. In the *Ode to a Nightingale*, he managed miraculously to present a rich constellation of sensations and feelings, only just stopping short of surfeit. It was not that his capacity to organize had particularly improved—though perhaps it had done so very slightly; it was rather that he was more jealously selective of his crowding intensities. It is possible, also, that he was helped by the fact that in his later work the top of his energy was gone, so that he lacked the superfluous gusto for his characteristic "chain of sensations." As regards his theme, or "thought," however, it must be remarked that the later work shows strikingly little development. There is scarcely an idea or attitude in *Hyperion*, or the *Odes*, which had not already been clearly developed in *Endymion* or the *Poems*. The ideas, indeed, are extraordinarily few—the thought is almost nil. In so far as thought is present, it is a thought apprehensible through the senses, or employed only for its value in *enhancing* the life of the senses. If we can believe Keats, a queer vague pseudo-philosophical scheme of "soul-making" (outlined in letters to Taylor and to his brother George) moves dimly and sluggishly under the flowery surface of *Endymion*: but it reduces itself to the idea that a hierarchy of sensations (with love at the top) educates the soul.



Perhaps the revised *Hyperion* would have been an attempt to define, in such a scheme, the office of the poet. But in this, and in the Odes, if we have any development at all it is simply in Keats's slightly sharper sense of the material he was dealing with, material essentially unchanged. It is still "O for a life of sensations rather than thoughts"; "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever"; "Beauty is truth." Of the Odes it has been said that they most fully develop Keats's "idealism of beauty." In this connexion there are two peculiar things to be noted. The first is that the Odes all deal (unless we except *Autumn*) with *one theme*, the antinomy of beauty and death. The Ode on Melancholy states this theme succinctly; the Ode to a Nightingale seeks escape (from the melancholy thus induced) in the thought that natural beauty is immortal; the Ode on a Grecian Urn seeks escape from it in the thought that beauty may be immortal in art; the Ode to Psyche seeks escape from it in the thought that beauty may be immortal in the consciousness of the witness—"in some untrodden region of the mind." The second point to be noted is that the so-called idealism so restlessly sought, and in these successive forms, is not at all a convinced idealism, but, on the contrary, a profound pessimism. In every case—even in *The Grecian Urn*—the *affective* burden—the melancholy of the overtone—far outweighs the *logical* burden in which Keats pretends to discover peace. A great part of the extraordinary beauty of the Odes ("the perfect simplicity of their simple perfection") results precisely from this unconscious conflict. They are all, to paraphrase and invert Wordsworth's *dictum*, tranquillity remembered in melancholy. And although Keats pretends to believe that he has transcended the senses, or found a refuge from their transience in a kind of "principle of beauty," nevertheless we must remark that this ideal is a *sensual* ideal, it is apprehensible only through the senses, and only desirable in proportion as it *is* so apprehensible. It is not essentially, therefore, an *ideal* that concerns and obsesses him, but a *permanent*. He does not really want to escape from the world of the senses, but to escape death. This is complicated, and greatly enriched emotionally, by a peculiar obsession of Keats, traceable, I should imagine, to his central difficulty, the mother-fixation; the curious obsession with death. Death and love, death and beauty, negative and positive, are a sort of bi-polar basis seldom absent

from his poetry. But the curious thing is the degree in which these terms, for Keats, were interchangeable. Death, for him, had a profoundly erotic significance—it became a symbol for consummation; and love, just as significantly, meant death. Into the precise mechanism of this it is not necessary to go. It forms the most pronounced single symptom of his disequibration, and relates clearly enough to his love-hatred of Fanny Brawne and his mother—his desire for love and his conviction that it would kill him—and his consequent morbid instability of behaviour in that regard. It also relates to the fact that everywhere in his poetry the ideas of love and death are ambivalent. His lovers are perpetually swooning; love is death; and death is both terrible and desirable. In the *Nightingale*, it is "rich to die." *Endymion*, whenever he encounters Cynthia, faints. *Porphyro* melts into the dream of *Madeline*. The victims of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* are kissed into unconsciousness. In a letter to Fanny Brawne, Keats is explicit about this obsession. "I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks," he says; "your loveliness, and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute."

The intellectual accompaniment to all this is pessimism. In his letters of the same period as the *Odes* we see Keats quite definitely standing on the verge of a gloomy mechanistic view. He sees nature red in tooth and claw, and man, like the hawk, pursuing an undeviating and instinctive way. He sees the rose in blossom, imagines it to have sensation, and then sees it deflowered by frost. He is disheartened: "The point at which man may arrive is as far as the parallel point in inanimate nature, and no farther"; man will never escape pain and death. Would this point of view have been fruitful for Keats—would his poetry have taken it over? It is possible that out of this "horrid morbidity" he would have cultivated a wisdom. But his poetry, at the time of his death, had taken, not this thought to which he had so rapidly reached, but the emotion that accompanied it, the excess of torture which it had occasioned. It is possible that his love-death obsession would never have allowed him more freedom, either in poetry or in speculation, than he had already found. In the *Odes*, his maturest work, the emotional side of Keats quite definitely funkcd the prospect. This might, or might not, have been a temporary escape-adjustment which he would quickly have outgrown.



## V

Miss Lowell touches little on these psychological features of Keats's genius, and that must be my excuse for perhaps dwelling on them too much. Of the "literary" influences on his work, Miss Lowell gives an exhaustive account, not always very convincing. To Endymion she allots too much space, and goes a good deal too far afield in her search for influences. Diodorus Siculus, for example, is invoked to explain the Triumph of Bacchus, but even he is not enough: for Keats's Bacchus is *plump*. A fearful difficulty! from which however the escape is triumphant. Rabelais has a Bacchus who, *inferentially* at any rate, is plump; so it is all satisfactory. But has Miss Lowell never encountered "plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne"? . . . There is too much of this sort of loose analogy in her John Keats. She strains at a gnat—when it is a rival who supplies it—but swallows her own camels very easily. With immense gusto she purports to prove that the fragmentary Fall of Hyperion antedates the longer Hyperion. The Woodhouse letter sufficiently disposes of that speculation. If more evidence is necessary, it is perhaps worth pointing out that in a letter to Woodhouse on October 27, 1818 (i.e., about the time he is supposed to have begun the poem in one form or the other) Keats mentions "*cogitating on the characters of Saturn and Ops*." As Ops does not appear in the Fall, and does appear in Hyperion, one may assume that Hyperion was the first written. Again, Miss Lowell attaches tremendous importance to a blue mantle, embroidered with stars, which Cynthia wears in Endymion. This points conclusively to Drayton's Endymion and Phoebe, she argues—although the book is so rare that only one copy could have been even speculatively accessible to Keats. Keats could quite as well, however, have got the mantle from Jonson. In the King James's Entertainment occurs: (1) "Agrypina, in yellow, a sable mantle, seeded with waking eyes, and silver fringe"; and (2) "Irene, her attire white, semined with stars." Or he could have got it from Marston, who influenced Keats in more ways than one. In his Entertainment, "Cynthia was discovered ryding; her habit was blewe satten, fairely embrodered with starres and cloudes." Keats learnt much from Marston, as a careful scrutiny of this particular poem, and the dedications, will show.

But this sort of influence must be studied with extreme care,

wide reading, and unerring fastidiousness of taste, and in these regards Miss Lowell is inclined to be headlong. She touches least on an influence which for Keats was of great importance—the influence of Chatterton. Chatterton, it is possible, influenced him not only in his work (the mediaevalism especially) but also in his life. The tragedy of Chatterton's life was then comparatively recent. It parallels in so many particulars Keats's own life that one speculates—idly perhaps—on the extent to which Keats, in his adolescence, may actually have been warped by it. His death-obsession found in Chatterton's early death a ready symbol; the temptation to romanticize that unfortunate career must have been great; and it was then only a step to the morbid assumption (peculiarly easy for Keats) that genius is *ipso facto* doomed to obloquy and premature death. Love, fame, and death were Keats's three graces. The death of a young poet—this was almost the most tragic (and attractive!) thing he could imagine. The death of a young poet, while in love, however, was a turn of the screw which, if he had conceived, he had certainly not discounted. When he realized that this was to be his destiny, his imagination gave it fullest value, and he died as passionately and uncontrolledly and *consciously* as he had lived. He grasped death hard with all his senses and went under the earth alive.

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## PAUL VALÉRY

BY EDMUND WILSON

MR T. S. ELIOT'S preface to Mr Wardle's translation of Paul Valéry's *Le Serpent*,<sup>1</sup> though distinguished and expert, is perhaps rather less satisfactory than his essays usually are. Presented as an introduction of Valéry to English readers who presumably cannot read French—since it is a question of translation—Mr Eliot is content to describe Valéry in terms of references which such readers would be very unlikely to understand. He says admirably that "what Valéry represents, and for which he is honoured and admired in France, is the reintegration of the symbolist movement into the great tradition"; but he does not provide a word of explanation of the characteristics of either the symbolist movement or the great tradition. "To Rimbaud, to Verlaine, and to Gerard de Nerval," he writes of a certain poem of Valéry, "the relationship is evident," and "Valéry's kinship with Mallarmé is too evident to need mention"—forgetting that, if a reader had read Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Gerard de Nerval, he would probably have read Valéry, too, and that if he were in a position to perceive their relationships as evident, he would require something more than a simple statement of that fact—that, in any case, he would probably not stand in need of an English translation. One feels in fact that Mr Eliot, on the whole, has failed either to describe his subject quite vividly, or to explain it quite carefully, enough to stimulate the ordinary reader, at the same time that he has not gone into it sufficiently deeply to interest the person who already knows something about it.

When Mr Eliot discusses the poet's "metaphysics," however, in connexion with M Thibaudet's book on Valéry,<sup>2</sup> he is very much to the point. M Thibaudet is a literary critic who seems chiefly

<sup>1</sup> *Le Serpent*. By Paul Valéry. With a translation into English by Mark Wardle and an introduction by T. S. Eliot. 51 pages. Published for The Criterion by R. Cobden-Sanderson. 10s. 6d.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Valéry. By Albert Thibaudet. 183 pages. *Les Cahiers Verts*: Bernard Grasset. 6 fr.

interested in philosophy—especially in that of Bergson, upon whom he has written a book and with whose ideas, illustrations, vocabulary, and style he has become entirely saturated: there are, indeed, whole passages in Thibaudet which might be mistaken for passages from Bergson. Now it appears from M Valéry's prose writings that he has undergone a number of extra-poetic influences—notably that of modern physics—but, on M Thibaudet's own admission, he has never read a word of Bergson. M Thibaudet's declared purpose then is to trace parallel tendencies in Bergson's philosophy and Valéry's poetry. He finds, for example, that the "metaphysical meditation of Le Cimetière Marin resembles a Bergsonian meditation: luckily for M Thibaudet, in this case, both Valéry and Bergson make conspicuous use of Zeno's arrow—the well-known paradox according to which, if a moving arrow be imagined as at rest at each instant of its flight, it will never be able to get from one position to another and so will never move at all. But surely the arrow is used in very different connexions by Valéry and by Bergson: for Bergson, it is an illustration of the errors one can fall into by attempting to discuss change in terms of a succession of fixed states, whereas for Valéry it is simply a figure for the feeling of death, of arrested movement, of the void, which comes upon him in the cemetery; if there is any appropriateness at all in comparing their ideas, it is plain that Bergson, with his mystical conception of "becoming" is concerned with proving the artificiality of ideas of fixity, whereas Valéry, here as elsewhere, is fascinated by the idea of immobility and drawn toward it as if it represented an absolute reality in whose "great diamond" our lives are but a "flaw"—

*"Tête complète et parfait diadème,  
Je suis en toi le secret changement."*

M Thibaudet even goes so far as to expound literary theory in terms of Bergsonian metaphysics. It is one of the characteristics of symbolism to write metaphors rather than similes and to pass without warning from one metaphor to another: M Thibaudet explains this as the supreme triumph of the Bergsonian realization that the universe is all of a piece and that our conception of it as consisting of different things is merely a fiction we have adopted for con-

venience: thus, whereas the old-fashioned poet would liken a woman's hair to falling water, for the symbolist, "the hair and the water have become a single reality and that is why, when, with romanticism, pure poetry becomes fully self-conscious, it refuses to disassociate them and rejects whenever it pleases the *ases* and the *likes*. . . . Mallarmé and Valéry have carried this as far as it can go." Much of the time, however, M Thibaudet is not so much distorting Valéry's ideas in order to make them coincide with Bergson's as translating the metaphors of Valéry into Bergsonian metaphors: he thus becomes engaged in the unprofitable occupation of interpreting one metaphysical poet in terms of another.

For all this, when M Thibaudet begins to write literary criticism, as he does toward the end of his book, he is interesting: "Mallarmé and Valéry have pushed to their limits and united those two apparent contradictions: the innermost and most intuitive essence of poetry and the severest technical rigor of form." Even here, however, the King Charles' head of Bergson cannot be kept out of the discussion: in the next sentence he adds in a parenthesis: "Should I be wrong in mentioning slyly here the name and the analogous philosophical effort of M Bergson?" One should note also the striking passage quoted by Mr Eliot in his preface: "All Mallarmé consists in this: a disinterested experiment on the confines of poetry, at a limit where other lungs would find the air unbreathable. Valéry has taken note of that experiment, watched it carefully, tested out its theory, and his own contribution has consisted in laying the foundation for its establishment as an institution."

M Thibaudet's mistake is to attempt to disengage from Valéry's poems the metaphysical ideas which they suggest and to state them as if they were the main subjects of interest; it is for this that Mr Eliot reproaches him. M Thibaudet does realize, to be sure, that he is making these ideas more explicit than the poet intended and he offers the following apologia: "This metaphysical element, it is I, it is the critic who introduces it, or rather who plays the midwife to it, who reduces, through dissociation and disarticulation, the concrete to the abstract, and who obeys that inevitable necessity of the *métier*: like Faguet, to wait for the poet in the woods and bid him hand over his ideas." It is plain, however, that this is



not the habit of mind of a critic deeply interested in the art of poetry. As Mr Eliot says, Valéry's poems should be read as works of art and not as speculations: M Thibaudet conveys a misleading impression of them. Valéry's achievement, in *Le Cimetière Marin*, for example, has been to make a poem of one of those moments when we are visited by ideas of the void—the void of death, the void of space—but, instead of offering general reflections on this subject, he puts the emotions, the ideas, in their setting—the cemetery, the sea, the noon-day sun, the cricket's chirp, the black wreaths, the doves. He has availed himself of the inventions of the symbolists—so expert at rendering complex sensations, at making the stabilities of the external world answer to the individual's varying apprehension of them—to present the emotion merged with the idea and both bound up with the scene which provokes them in such a way that all three seem inextricably identified with one another. He is not didactic, he does not want to convince you of anything; he is not emotional, he has a rigorously objective ideal; he is not content with the poetry of sensations, the music—the music without words—of Mallarmé. As a rule, he sets a definite stage, as Mallarmé rarely does, but then puts on a drama in which it becomes difficult to tell whether the action is passing between real characters or between the ideas in the poet's head or the feelings in his heart. As M Thibaudet says, his poetry "stands as if at the cross-roads of three poetic movements: the classic, the Parnassian and the symbolist—and combines them in one common essence." It is thus possible for him to recall Alfred de Vigny, by his moral ideas and his marmoreal effects, and Mallarmé, by his subtleties, both at the same time.

The kind of ideas which preoccupy Valéry are well illustrated by *Le Cimetière Marin*. He is fascinated, as I have suggested, by the absolute. It is not a system of thought which he is recommending, but an order of emotions which he is expressing and, in his poems, it takes many forms. As the man in *Le Cimetière Marin* seems only the secret change in the completeness and perfection of the noon-day sun, so in *Le Serpent* the universe is only a blemish in the purity of nothingness. He would suspend even satisfaction and enjoy it only in a timeless imminence: that for him is the true satisfaction. In *Les Pas*, he begs the being who is approaching him—human or divine, it is difficult to tell which—not to hasten, as he enjoys awaiting her as much as her kiss; and



the Serpent addresses Eve in the following terms on the subject of tasting the fruit of the tree—

*"Que si ta bouche fait un rêve,  
Cette soif qui songe à la sève,  
Ce délice à demi futur,  
C'est l'éternité fondante, Eve!"*

He seems to admire his mistress most when she appears to him in this timeless aspect—that is, when she is asleep: in *Dormeuse*, he sees her form as a pure abstraction, from which her personality has, as it were, departed, and, in *La Fausse Morte*, he reflects that sleep is a kind of death "*plus précieuse que la vie*." Thus other human beings, when they appear in Valéry's poems, are usually either asleep or dead—or, like the woman in *Intérieur*, are merely insubstantial presences which pass before the eyes of the mind like glass before the sun. (Almost such a presence M Teste, in the letter printed in this month's *DIAL*, makes Mme Teste feel.) As a rule, he prefers marble columns or stately trees. His imaginary characters, though they have their tragedy, their humour, and their sensuous beauty, are always abstract. And like the Narcissus who is the hero of one of his finest poems, he seems interested primarily in himself, or rather in the mind by itself. Paul Valéry is the poet of the mind alone—the mind moved by the contradiction between the change with which life confronts it and in which it feels itself involved and the changeless abstraction to which it turns instinctively as to a native element.

Such a temperament has found a technique and a colour appropriate to it. Valéry's success with his difficult material—which does so little toward carrying the poet part way by interesting the ordinary reader on its own account—is one of the most impressive achievements in contemporary literature. His passion for durability has led him to work in a supremely accurate and compact language moulded to exacting regular forms; his poems are solid, they are constructed in a way that Mallarmé's are not. In his volume of essays, *Variété*, Valéry is evidently speaking for himself apropos of *La Fontaine*:

"It was never a lazy man's game, to extract a little grace, a little clarity, a little permanence, from the mobility of the things of

the mind; and to transform that which passes into that which endures. And the more restless and elusive one's prey, the more attention and determination are needed to render it eternally present in its attitude eternally fleeing. . . . Rhymes, fixed forms, obligatory metres, all these arbitrary rules, once for all adopted by us and opposed to ourselves, have a sort of philosophic beauty of their own. Chains which are pulled tight at each movement of our genius remind us instantly of all the scorn which we should feel toward that familiar chaos which the vulgar call *thought* and as to which they do not realize that its natural conditions are no less fortuitous, no less futile, than the conditions of a charade."

Valéry's texture and colour are chiefly determined by this taste for the unstained, the absolute: his favourite adjective is "*pur*." A poet of considerable virtuosity—"Où tant de marbre est tremblant sur tant d'ombres," and "L'insecte net gratte la sécheresse," are lines in the same poem—he runs by preference to effects of the crystalline, the silvery, and the translucent, in which he excels. The pool of Narcissus, for example, offers him an ideal subject: it is evening in the forest—"Une tendre lueur d'heure ambiguë existe"—the water is as smooth as a mirror—"onde déserte, et digne, Sur son lustre, du lisse effacement d'un cygne"—when Narcissus speaks to his image in the pool—"Le bruit Du souffle que j'enseigne à tes lèvres, mon double, Sur la limpide lame a fait courir un trouble!" His human figures are like fine statues which have yet a vibrancy and a soft envelopment. So he describes Eve in *Le Serpent*:

"Calme, claire, de charmes lourde,  
Je dominais furtivement,  
L'oeil dans l'or ardent de ta laine,  
Ta nuque énigmatique et pleine  
Des secrets de ton mouvement!"

Later, when she is tempted:

"Le marbre aspire, l'or se cambre!  
Ces blondes bases d'ombre et d'ambre  
Tremblent au bord du mouvement!"

The description of the sleeping woman in the sonnet, *Dormeuse*, contains what is surely one of his most miraculous lines:

*"Ta forme au ventre pur qu'un bras fluide drape."*

Mr Eliot has compared Valéry to Yeats by virtue of the position of importance which he occupies: he resembles Yeats, also, in the remarkable extent to which he has kept his consciousness uncluttered and untarnished at a time when it seems peculiarly difficult for the poet to strike a vein of genuine feeling and to maintain a taste sufficiently true to express it in verse of fine quality. His description of the average French book of the period before the war, in his essay *La Crise de l'Esprit*, is interesting in this connexion:

"In almost any book of that time—and not merely in the inferior ones—you can easily find an influence from the Russian Ballet, a little of the sombre style of Pascal, much impressionism of the Goncourt type, something of Nietzsche, something of Rimbaud, certain effects due to association with painters, and occasionally the tone of scientific writings—the whole perfumed with an English flavour difficult to analyze."

Valéry, like Yeats, has maintained a chastity and a dignity undisturbed by the surrounding medley. But, whereas Yeats withdrew completely—and quite consciously, as it appears from his autobiographical writings—from a world spoiled for him as much by science as by democratic society, taking refuge in the more congenial, if obsolete, researches of astrology and magic; Valéry has found at least one phase of contemporary intellectual activity pure and noble enough for his taste and has nourished his appetite for abstraction with the abstractions of modern mathematics and physics. Indeed, he sometimes seems almost the poet of that part of the mind which occupies itself with these things. Is not M Teste, after all, something of a scientific hero?

## TWO POEMS

BY MABEL SIMPSON

### SONG

O Earth, how lonely you would be  
Without the Wind, without the Sea.

We come and go, we live and die,  
At last within your breast we lie.

And all the lovely words we say,  
And all the lovely prayers we pray,

Are put away, are put away.

Only the Winds and Waters stay.

### HERE ONCE THE ROSE

Here once the rose  
In splendour laid  
Her slender beauty, yellow sprayed.

Here once the dew  
In morning fell  
Upon the hidden lily bell.

And here the thrush  
With silver throat  
Did loosen every Spring his note,  
And the bright robin showed his coat.

No more, no more,  
Shall rose and thrush  
Make sweet with sight and sound the bush,  
Nor robins break  
The endless hush.



THE THINKER. BY ADOLF DEHN





LOVERS. BY ADOLF DEHN

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## PARIS LETTER

*May, 1925*

THE death of Bakst saddens even those who do not thereby lose a friend: for with Bakst there passes a whole section of their youth, too soon and too fast. 1909. The first Russian Ballets: Sadko, with its submarine depths; the enchantment of that great hanging Smyrna rug which was the setting of Scheherazade: there is no doubt that to the end of our lives, long as they may be, we shall retain intact the image of these riches. Cleopatra, Saint Sebastian, Helen of Sparta—that draft upon all forms, that conjunction of all epochs, unified by a new technique of decoration—few centuries have seen its like. It is true that his art is too often vulgar, barbaric, effective only as a blow between the eyes; but such as it is, it has now become an historical phenomenon with its fifteen years of influence upon manners, the theatre, the city, books, and music. M Reynaud's book on Bakst, which appeared only a few days before his death, testifies to that. It has been said that his was a Jewish art, with its emphasis upon raw tones, its passion for gold and precious metals, its dearth of line, its nomadic origins, its Oriental sensuality, its contempt for architectural construction. Bakst was, in fact, a Jew; and it was great Israelite audiences that established the success of the Russian Ballet, that first great international success, marked by the boldness of the audience's dress, its immodesties, extravagant coiffures, depilated bodies, cosmetics; by that mixture of all modes to the point where one could not always distinguish between the house and the stage. Whatever it was, it is certain that the historians of the future shall be obliged to recognize in the coming of the Russian Ballet to Paris the first sign, before the great war, the first announcement to the West of the Russo-Asiatic movement which has to-day awakened half the globe.

The efforts of the Russian Ballet since the war, though they manifest an extraordinary intelligence and vitality with their

utilization of cubism, their stylization of futurism, their appeals to the composers of the younger schools, have accomplished no more than to prolong a dolorous agony. Strawinsky contributed the aid of his rising glory with Petrouchka and the Rossignol; but already in his *Sacre du Printemps* and later in his *Noces* he was turning to a pure music which transcends theatrical ministrations. All scenic embellishments seem to-day unnecessary to this composer. The hour of the Russian Ballet is past.

In Léon Bakst we lose a charming companion; a simple and kindly man, who revolutionized an era without losing his naïveté. His absence will be regretted as deeply in Europe as in America, where he found a warm welcome which greatly comforted the last months of his life.

The death of Anatole France brings to me the reflection that sceptics who become dessicated in life keep admirably, thanks to the embalming they have been careful to accomplish during their lifetime. The tears of the crowd are for romancers and poets, for those who have made it weep. Whatever respect he may hold for Anatole France, an impartial observer living in Paris at this moment must admit that the official ceremonies were scarcely terminated before everyone ceased to weep for the master. The book of his former secretary, J.-J. Brousson, *Anatole France en Pantoufles*,<sup>1</sup> shocked a few, but greatly diverted the many. Fifty thousand copies sold in the first month bear witness to that. France appears in it in the crude, implacable lines of a passport photograph: a sort of monstrous *bourgeois* idol, a veritable Père Ubu of literature, egotistical, intolerant, false, hypocritical, and heartless. He is an aristocrat and anti-plebeian; a Jacobin, but a collector of ecclesiastical objects; a revolutionary locked in the past; speaking of nothing but love, but contenting himself with the sexual diversions of a Parisian labourer on a Saturday night. Another book, *Anatole France à la Béchellerie* (his country estate in Touraine) by M le Goff, speaks chiefly of France after 1914. The great writer appears to be treated here with greater respect than in the other book, but in fact he is treated more cruelly. One sees in it a very old France, drowsy, a superficial pacifist, an apostle without faith, without friends, and without illusions.

<sup>1</sup> To be published in translation by J. B. Lippincott and Company.

M Brousseau's book affords this explanation:

"Why did I go over to Socialism?" said France. "It is better to be led than to be driven."

And this opinion of his work:

"My finest books? Those which have had no success: *l'Histoire Comique*, *Jeanne d'Arc*. My poorest books? Those that the whole world has praised: *Thaïs*, *Le Lys Rouge*."

At the opposite extreme to Anatole France's cloistered art and the style of the bookworm stand the stories of modern adventure, such as that of Pelletier d'Oisy, who flew from Paris to Tokio. To me these tales of flight through the air are never wearying, and I get a dizzy thrill from them. These continents traversed in a day; luncheon in India, tea in Siam, dinner in Indo-China, or almost that; countries traversed as though they were the quarters of a single city—these are pleasures which will presently bore our descendants, or perhaps even ourselves, but for the moment they enchant me. That method of travel is an excellent one. The more I travel the greater joy speed gives to me. One should spend two hours in a town, or ten years. The first contact, the first shock of a new scene upon our unconscious is too often effaced in the weeks of the sojourn which follow, by consciousness, when we admit such utterly noxious things as guides, documents, visits, and anecdotes. The universe ought not to be a fat encyclopaedia, but a pocket manual, a hand-book. Our aim must not be to try to lose ourselves in it, but to find ourselves readily. I have essayed various methods, and I confess that I experience incomparable delights in trips at lightning speed, in which that which has been seen remains in the mind in its broad outlines, its balanced masses, helping to develop a true sense of realities, of the proportions between spirits and objects, which after all is the aim of all disinterested travel.

I have read with great pleasure the *Manet* which J.-E. Blanche has just published through Rieder, and which follows the mediocre *Cézanne* of M Klingsor. Who has said that Blanche admires nothing? He is an old enthusiast, like Hokusai. J.-E. Blanche knew Manet in his youth, and all his life he has followed and admired this artist who remains the greatest of modern painters. He speaks of him with flavour and abundance, as writer and as painter, providing an agreeable contrast to those criticisms of art

written in an incredible jargon from which it is impossible to receive the slightest profit and of which one can never remember a single line.

E. Champion has published a remarkable book entitled *Les Langues du Monde*, by a group of eminent linguists, including Professor Meillet, Cohen, Vendryès, and others. In this book all known languages are classified by families.

A new periodical, *La Revue Juive*, published at Geneva and Paris under the auspices of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* and the direction of A. Cohen, has just appeared. It is the first publication of its kind. Rieder, the publisher, is also to issue a series of books under the general title *Judaïsme*, edited by MM. Fleg and Couchard. I have spoken above of the Russian Ballet as the forerunner of a Jewish art. There is now in France—and we must observe it without prejudice—a much larger Jewish public than existed here before the war. The success of *Histoires Juives*, a collection of pleasant tales, and of the Silberman of J. de Lacretelle,<sup>1</sup> published by the N. R. F., of this same *Revue Juive*, and the present triumph of Honegger's *Le Roi David* are manifest proof. *L'Enquête sur les Juifs de France*, announced for publication by Benjamin Crémieux, should be an interesting document in this connexion.

PAUL MORAND

<sup>1</sup> Silberman, by Jaques De Lacretelle, translated by Brian Lunn (12mo, 191 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$2).

# BOOK REVIEWS

## POEMS IN PASTEL

ONE WAY OF LOVE. *By Cuthbert Wright. 12mo.*  
71 pages. *Elkin Mathews.*

SOME time past, as we were philanthropically engaged in boxing up books for the Merchant Marine, we had occasion to comb over our acquisitions of the past ten years. Pride of possession vanished in a welter of half-forgotten volumes of verse, each with its first fly leaf duly inscribed with our own name (and sometimes, we remember modestly, with someone's else) and a date we once had reason to believe would be significant. Turning over hundreds of leaves, we found infallible evidence of careful perusal: bright stanzas bracketed, lively figures underlined, asterisks placed over against such verses as we had thought distinctly good, possibly because they reminded us of something better. Here had been industry decidedly aesthetic, and all to no purpose, apparently, for try as hard as we could (once we had nailed up our boxes of volumes for the high seas) only wide breakers of Spenser, and Shelley, and Swinburne came rolling in from our historic past. Bob as bob would the rickety skiff of our memory, it was always to such surf as surges across the footlights at Corneille, for instance. We smiled to think what pain and embarrassment this acknowledgement would once have cost us.

As some men choose friends we choose causes: for the enemies they have made. So it is that the poetical stir of the last ten years has left us glowing with an ardent admiration for the grand manner: for prose and verse in buskins. No fashion of well-informed futility can alter our perversity: our corruption is personal and hopeless. What pets men keep involve vexed questions of character, for pet poems are like pet cats: sooner or later they come back unbidden; night and morning one is apt to find them on the stoop of the brain, friendly, even familiar. Sometimes, gazing at the gorgeous angoras of our neighbours, we feel ashamed

of common cats like "Comus," "Adonais," and "Hero and Leander."

Yet these are good cats. Calculation would convince us if form failed, for all back-fence serenading to the contrary, the birthrate in verse has not been what we should have expected. Litters of lyrics are becoming so perishable, or infrequent, that poetry, like modern society, bids fair to wither away at the top. So it was, rummaging among the remnants of our first editions, we were not altogether shocked to find how generous we had been with our sailors. If there was anything to be ashamed of about the few books we had kept for sale at our decease, ownership, we reflected, was scarcely the word. As we glanced over these reminiscently, we found ourself gazing into pools, peeping at reflections—not our own exactly, rather composite images, vague and colourless, very much like that sort of photograph one will wire, some day, to dear friends. Narcissus, we seemed to remember, perished in youth; how was it that poets were almost invariably long-lived? Thus it was, we argued, that the older they grew the more bitterly they smirked at their first ventures.

Only mock modesty, however, could make the author of *One Way of Love* coy of his parenthood—at so early a date. Candour compels us to confess that these poems are of unequal merit: at least two of Mr Wright's efforts are quite as bad as the worst of the best of poets. Yet two short lapses, together with a few distinctly unfortunate passages, is surely no very large allowance for the generous, if rotund, passions of youth. And one other lyric, for its severe grace and inevitable simplicity is unforgettable: no mean praise in these busy days when the bulk of rememberable poems could be wadded in a walnut shell. The colours of this book are pastel, sometimes plain grey; these poems are some of them boyish, literary, even grandiose. For us, the most ambitious, *Ballad of a Factory Town*, is unhappily stained with a persistent memory of teas and tempests of ten years ago. Precisely in this poem—by far the most worldly successful of them all—does the finest quality of Mr Wright's verse, felicitous simplicity, become a trifle arch. A certain demureness of method here falters into sly speech and prim effects. Obviously (we contend that this platitude has become a troubled creed) the most deadly solvent for whatever magic verse may own, is even a faint suspicion of insincerity



or pose. Mr Wright goes down fighting on the nobler side, for splurge it is that most frequently becomes ridiculous, not economy. From a Study by Flandrin holds the essence of spare poetry, winning us, if ever, with the power of austere expression—winning us completely in this instance.

One Way of Love belongs to days when musicians, for instance, were not ashamed of a resolution of chords. Within the last ten years writers of all varieties have spread the fashion of working with hints, winks, and jokes, paring down their words to the last refinement of the ineffable. Because affection for self-expression is a barren love, poets grow wise by growing weary of themselves. Thereupon they fall desperately in love with life (beyond or above them, however they may choose to phrase their sainthood) and come back to their youth, with a difference. Swinburne is a case in point: rarely has man been so thorough a dupe of words as he. Against all forms of the belly worship of holy India stands forever the verbal balance of great style.

Nine years ago Mr Wright was hardly ready for a conversion to mature expression, being quite naturally concerned with how he looked against the unalterable background of the world. Yet bits of these poems, stray verses flooded with the long level light of autumn afternoons, suggest the inevitable evidence of success with words: a sensation of recoil toward rest. What tricks he has are innocent, because they are never shrewd enough to hide his failures. Even before the secondary sentiments of reflection the storm and stress of egotistic contrariness vanish. Some poets are so happy as occasionally to speak quickly and exactly; unlucky ones never succeed without tinsel and bunting. Unwillingly as we should advise Mr Wright to go on exactly as he began, seriously as we hesitate to say anything that might augment the current downpour of verse, we suggest that according to the faith of poetry, the sin against the holy ghost is silence.

STEWART MITCHELL

## MR OSBERT SITWELL'S FICTION

TRIPLE FUGUE. By Osbert Sitwell. 12mo. 311 pages. George H. Doran Company. \$2.50.

THE productions of Mr Sitwell and his gifted brother and sister have been considered less as normal books than as a series of vaudeville turns of rare virtuosity. Each production has provoked the chorus of rather mechanical "Ohs" and "Ahs" which follows a well-advertised set-piece on an evening of fireworks, and those who have not been amused have thought it sufficient to explain that they disliked fireworks. The fondness of all three for the figures of *commedia dell'arte* may have encouraged their critics to regard them as exempt from ordinary criticism, as their favourite clowns would have been exempt; but this indulgence is scarcely flattering, and must be extremely unwelcome to such brilliant and disillusioned poets.

But it is possible that the Sitwells themselves have sometimes been confused by the literary Mardi Gras with which it has become traditional to associate their names. The elder Mr Sitwell's present collection of six naturalistic short stories ought, by its conception, to be quite distinct from the specialties of the family troupe. He writes of two odd spinsters in a sea-side town who lose their inheritance, and one of whom commits suicide (Low Tide); two women admirers of a man of letters who weary of him because he will not commit suicide as his friend has done (Friendship's Due); a mysterious murder and the return of the victim (The Greeting); the miserable marriage of a professional Don Juan (His Ship Comes Home). Mr Sitwell is in magnificent possession of all these pathetic situations, magnificently aware of their pathos without any tenderness at all, and his observation is so tirelessly precise that it very nearly amounts to narrative genius.

But it is a serious business to write seriously, and he seems too often to remember his reputation and to delight in his own virtuosity. There is a certain debris of the eternal Mardi Gras—paper noses, trick landscapes, and the mechanical moon—scarcely appropriate to these drab themes. There are too many adjectives,



too many recapitulations, too many startling combinations of "there reigned" and "our hero" and "in fact, the whole had an indefinable atmosphere" with the most startling novelties of imagery, too many generous circumlocutions of a rather German syntax, too many vivacious digressions, too many cumbersome short-cuts. The result is a style very difficult to read: the light touch become encyclopaedic, a Petit Trianon loaded with gargoyles.

This method seems designed less for the sake of the six subjects than to reflect Mr Sitwell's temperament. Desiring to display all his capacities at once, he has not been willing to suppress the verbal painter while the disillusioned man of the world delivers his monologue in the tone of a sepulchral drawing-room, or to silence that rather pompous, acrid voice while the painter depicts a bright and crooked world. The six tales grow confused, seem to be at last but six divisions of a long performance. And Mr Sitwell is continually on the stage, dressed in rapid succession in all the aspects of his mind, in a lounge-suit of his petulance or the full-dress of his wit.

The Author's Preface, in which Mr Sitwell threatens to prosecute for libel any character attempting to recognize himself in the book, can only serve to provoke the attempts at identification which it forbids; it is either an ill-judged frivolity or a lamentable allurements. Indiscreet fiction appears to be in vogue at the moment. Certain authors have become extremely popular by taking the calling-cards of private life out of their top-hats and turning them into the monstrous heroes and heroines of fiction. It is a libertine art: portraiture executed chiefly for the pleasure of those who never saw the original, portraiture consequently somewhat lacking in sobriety or even in politeness. Mr Sitwell seems to be scrupulously polite; but there is in the title story of his book an unpleasant suggestion of revenge by caricature and the wearisome profusion of a transcript from the life.

GLENWAY WESCOTT

## BESITZ UND GEMEINGUT

WOLFGANG GOETHE. By Georg Brandes. Translated from the Danish by Allen W. Porterfield. Two volumes. 12mo. 991 pages. Nicholas L. Brown. \$10.

DR BRANDES has in this biography remembered what Goethe counsels the biographer not to forget—that succeeding generations have a flimsy idea of preceding periods; that nothing is to be assumed, everything is to be related. We should, however, welcome a consideration of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, fuller than the slender chapter which Dr Brandes vouchsafes us, and are defrauded in the absence of any but cursory allusions to Goethe's letters, essays, and reviews. Furthermore, one feels Dr Brandes to be a more "trusting student" of Goethe than one is oneself when he says that "by the mere touch of his spiritual personality, Goethe had initiated Carlyle into life and literature"; that in "publishing under his own name, the most beautiful poems *Marianne von Willemer* ever produced," he "conferred honor when he took." Dr Brandes' gift of epithet is manifest in his alluding to Bettina's "burrlike hanging on" and "youthful boldness," to Schiller's "noble and striving nature," in his characterizing of Frau von Klettenberg as "a Protestant nun," and Goethe as "a fortress, not an open town"; his military preempting of judgement, however, would scarcely convert one to his admiration for Goethe if one did not already share it. A certain infelicity of speech is heightened, one suspects, by the translation in which, notwithstanding the translator's confessed loyalty to the text, his idea of idiom seems a false one, resulting as it does in such phrases as "quite a few," "quite a while," "measured up," "forever and a day," "apt to be full of," and "time out of mind."

That of which one is above all, and always delightfully conscious, throughout this truly fervent work, is Goethe's lyric power. One especially values what is said of his "musical skill" and "tonal depth"—of his "magnificent technique" as a result of which, greater effects have "never been produced by fewer words and simpler means." Although certain poems quoted by Dr Brandes do not

seem to us "immortal masterpieces," we feel "the fire," "the manly seriousness," "the tenderness," "the real humor," "the great glamor," the "inner richness of Goethe's being which makes it impossible for even a short stanza to be empty."

We are especially indebted to Dr Brandes for his paragraphs upon Goethe as counsel for the defence in certain legal cases and for his comment upon Goethe's discoveries in anatomy, geology, and botany, for which he says "we feel a respect nearly deeper than that evoked by his purely poetic creations."

"Casting off works in the process of self creation," describing his life as "the incessant turning and lifting of a stone that had to be turned and lifted once more," Goethe is himself, as Dr Brandes implies, his greatest work of art. This man who "never rode on a railway train, never sailed on a steamship, who read by a tallow lamp and wrote with a goosequill," who "never saw Paris, never saw London, never saw St. Petersburg, never saw Vienna, and caught but a fleeting glimpse of Berlin," "was within himself, a whole and complete civilization." "He was among minds," as Dr Brandes says, "what the Pacific Ocean is among the waters of the earth. In reality only a small part of it is pacific." We see an evolving enthusiasm such that the preference for Gothic is "wheeled about" to a preference for the art of ancient Greece, "somewhat as one would turn a fiery charger." Aloof from politics, yet as a passionate economist, he appears "in the person of the singular Uncle in Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre whose watchword, Besitz und Gemeingut, was inscribed round about on his various buildings somewhat as the Oriental peoples adorn the walls of their houses with excerpts from the Koran." We see his spiritual independence, his love of liberty as "the opposite of coercion, but not the opposite of a voluntary subjection to such coercion as that of moral discipline, or that of metrics, or social forms, or reasonable law"—a concept embodied in his saying, "*Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben.*" We recall with Croce, his "opposing that in French literature which was intellectualistic and ironical, aged and correct like an old lady" as against his reviling "those Germans who were wont to justify every unseemliness they wrote by saying that they had 'lived it.'" We see his unconquerably social nature as evinced by his many friends; a distrust of his age, on the other hand, such that "when finally

as a result of extraordinary exertion, he had finished the second part of Faust, he sealed the manuscript with seven seals, and laid it aside for posterity, convinced that his contemporaries would simply misunderstand it." By this "development of the soul in accord with its inborn ability," we are reminded of "that manifoldness in simplicity of mountains," which Goethe himself admired.

MARIANNE MOORE

## TWO VIEWS OF BYRON

BYRON: THE LAST JOURNEY. *By Harold Nicolson, 12mo. 288 pages. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$4.*

THE POLITICAL CAREER OF LORD BYRON. *By Dora Neill Raymond. 12mo. 363 pages. Henry Holt and Company.*

MISS RAYMOND has written an interesting book on Byron's political career from the conventional point of view of the admiring biographer. For her, all of Byron's parliamentary speeches, political lampoons, and revolutionary activities in Italy and Greece were the result of wise and well considered opinions. For her, his motives are invariably generous, disinterested, and honest. The question of his unsteady and complex character does not arise for her at all. To take a single example, in discussing Byron's hatred of the radicals, she describes the squib he wrote upon his friend Hobhouse's relations with them as "a rollicking and somewhat sarcastic ballad"—whereas it is perhaps more likely to seem to a reader of the ballad in question and of Byron's letters dealing with this period that he had merely given vent to his own irritation at the aimlessness of his life in Italy and his envy at his friend's achievements in England by an outburst less rollicking and sarcastic than jeering and ill-natured. Furthermore, it seems clear that Byron's hatred of oppression and ready sympathy with the unfortunate was somehow bound up with what would be called nowadays a sort of "inferiority complex"; but Miss Raymond takes his exalted position and virtue on trust and fails to understand his real social and personal situation.

Mr Harold Nicolson, on the other hand, understands these matters only too well. Mr Nicolson is a pupil of the school of Strachey and has learned the whole technique of hounding down the idiosyncrasies and personal imperfections which fix the shape of spectacular public careers. This enables him, if not to reproduce the successes of the Master, at least to write such a passage as the following, which comes nearer to arriving at the truth about Byron than a biography in Miss Raymond's vein can do:

"It must be realized that the life of Byron is not, as has often been imagined, a series of wasted opportunities; rather is it a catalogue of false positions. His brain was male, his character was feminine. He had genius, but it was misunderstood and misdirected; he had beauty, but it was branded by deformity; he had rank, but no position; fortune, but it came too late; fame, but it blazed for him too early. From his childhood the foreground of his life had been out of focus with the background; throughout his career this error of focus marred the sincerity, the completeness, and even the meaning of the whole."

Yet the Strachey formula has come to have its penalties as well as its rewards: one of these is the use or the excessive use of irony where it is not really appropriate. There is a point in Strachey's own irony: as Mr Clive Bell has pointed out, Strachey's ironic treatment of the Victorian age implies a comparative study of the whole history of society. He does not write about Madame du Deffand or Racine in the same vein as Florence Nightingale or Dr Arnold. Even in Eminent Victorians, where he is most cruel and perhaps most unfair, his efforts are directed toward compelling us to accept a certain definite point of view. Now the chief danger of his disciples has been in adopting his tone without understanding his point of view: Mr Philip Guedalla has become perhaps the worst offender in this regard. Mr Guedalla is full of ironic inflections and invidious details which, upon being closely examined, turn out to have no significance. And Mr Nicolson, in writing of Byron, is not entirely free from the same vice. "Our visit was a long one," records Lady Blessington. It was. They sat in the large, cool room, et cetera." Now what is there ridiculous about the fact that Lady Blessington's visit to Byron should have been long? Why does Mr Nicolson write "It was" in such a sly knowing fashion? For no other reason on earth than that he has caught the tone from Mr Strachey. There is some room for irony, to be sure, in any biography of a hero whose reputation has been swollen by so much romantic nonsense as Byron's has; yet I am inclined to believe that, except in his preface, Mr Nicolson has bent a little too far over backwards in his endeavour to avoid the legend. For after all, the legend was a reality as much as Byron's effeminate voice, which Mr Nicolson is so unwilling to have us forget.



"That in this sudden ferment of unexpected adulation Byron should have been manoeuvred into adopting the postures which were expected of him was perhaps inevitable. . . . [The provoking spectre of Childe Harold] thrust upon him the exacting function of being a very dangerous and enterprising man. His slightest civility was interpreted as a seduction; his chance encounters became assignations. They persisted, all of them, in taking him at his word. For a man who, although kindly and sentimental, was only adequately sexed, all this became extremely exhausting."

Yet Byron himself had created Childe Harold and his postures and more than half believed in them: he believed in them and made others believe in them and they thus became actual values, which Mr Nicolson should have brought on the stage. "Kindly and sentimental" is a quite inadequate description of Byron in his relations with women: on the contrary, he seems always to have been ready to flare, if only momentarily, into a romantic devotion, and to have been able to inject into even the most unpromising of his love affairs a mood or two of passionate conviction. Even from his half-humorous daily bulletins to Lady Melbourne, it is plain that he pursued his mistresses with an anxiety and an energy considerably more than "kindly and sentimental" and one can scarcely doubt that he availed himself of the grand manner for even those who pursued him. Mr Nicolson, in writing about Byron with Childe Harold left out, has illustrated the un-humanistic point of view to which Stracheyism is likely to lead. If a critic be too wary of taking the figures of history and the heroes of literature at their own valuation and that of their contemporaries, he is likely to miss the point altogether. Every age has its complacent failures of intelligence and we have learned to laugh at the "reasonable" point of view of the eighteenth century and the moral one of the nineteenth, but it looks as if this new sort of ironic belittlement were likely to become characteristic of our own. What should be most interesting at any time is to find out to what reality of human history Childe Harold corresponded.

For the rest, Miss Raymond's book is an agreeable and useful one and Mr Nicolson's an extremely vivid and amusing one, which has far more of his own in it than his preceding biography of Tennyson, in which, as if for a literary exercise, he paraphrased the

whole last page of Queen Victoria. Confining itself, as it does, to the last year of Byron's life, it necessarily falls short of being satisfactory as a full-length portrait of Byron and indeed simply presupposes on the part of the reader a knowledge of most of what has gone before; but of that last year he makes an excellent narrative, especially satisfactory for its use of unpublished documents and for its first-hand knowledge of Greece. Both books are of a sort particularly valuable in connexion with Byron. For Byron presents a peculiar case in literature: he was not a great literary artist and we can appreciate his real merits and understand why it was possible for Arnold to speak in one breath of "Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force" only when we have familiarized ourselves with both his works and his life. What we realize then and what both Miss Raymond's and Mr Nicolson's book help us to realize is the knowledge of Europe and of the world, the consciousness of the stage upon which he was playing, that make him remarkable among modern Englishmen; the generous impulses and ideas which compensated his errors and his shortcomings; and the indefatigable capacity for experience so satisfactory in contrast to the race of literary men who have succeeded him and who have diverted the security and regularity of their existences by turning out so many novels and poems.

EDMUND WILSON



## AN INTERPRETER OF AMERICAN LIFE

ARROWSMITH. *By Sinclair Lewis. 12mo. 448 pages.*  
*Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$2.50.*

MR SINCLAIR LEWIS, like Mr H. L. Mencken, is a paradox in the United States of to-day. A leading trait of the American people is a youthful self-consciousness amounting to an inferiority complex, which makes us impatient of all criticism. Everything which we have done is right because we did it. All our wars were just; all our statesmen are pure; all our business is honest. Ours is the land of liberty, of tolerance, of opportunity, of righteousness. Our favourite prophets are the sayers of smooth things in Zion, those who speak comfortably to Jerusalem of her ideals and performances—Wilson, Harding, Coolidge. And yet by some sort of saving grace, in the midst of this complacency appear Mr Lewis and Mr Mencken, to tear the hoods and sheets off our moral and civic Ku Klux Klan, to show the cringing forms and the false, cowardly, cruel faces beneath the mask—and Mr Mencken and Mr Lewis as critic and novelist are, in this day and generation, the most read and considered interpreters of American life. They are constantly telling truths about their country for which less fortunate devils are being hounded out of pulpits and college chairs, losing business and social standing, and occasionally suffering physical punishment at the hands of court or clan, and yet they flourish like two green bay trees.

One explanation of this phenomenon is to be found in the fact that both Mr Mencken and Mr Lewis write the American language. It is a natural impulse when one hears one's own tongue in the midst of foreign speech—and most of his literature is foreign to the ordinary sensual American—to turn and listen, even if the meaning is unpleasant. And a second explanation lies in the fact that both Mr Mencken and Mr Lewis are good-natured and affable. They find the spectacle one tending to amusement rather than indignation. Humour is the form in which the American takes his cathartic—the Biglow Papers, Josh Billings, Artemus Ward, and Mark Twain, for examples. Even so there is still an unex-

plainable residuum, especially in the case of Mr Lewis who is undoubtedly long and, in the opinion of many readers whose devotion is the more remarkable, dull. If Mr Lewis attracts his great audience by the sense of reality which his pages convey, and the careless humour of his approach, he holds it by a sense of the importance of what he has to say.

In Main Street Mr Lewis employed the inclusive formula of the naturalists, setting down as much of the visual and audible stuff of life in Gopher Prairie as his vehicle could carry, the motive power being furnished by the ambitions of Carol Kennicott, wife of the local physician. In Babbitt he adopted a much more rapid and impressionistic method. The life of Zenith is merely the background for the hero, who in his egregious vulgarity and pitiful self-conceit, is accepted everywhere along with General Dawes as the typical American business man, booster, and patrioteer. If Main Street looks back to Zola, Babbitt is in the more humorous, highly coloured, exaggerated manner of Daudet. George F. Babbitt is an American Tartarin. In Arrowsmith, Mr Lewis returns to his earlier method. There is much of life as it is lived in a Mid-Western university town, a Dakota village, an Iowa city, and finally in New York; but the background is chiefly occupational as in the classics of the Rougon-Macquart series. Martin Arrowsmith is a physician and a medical scientist, and the experience of his disillusionment with that high calling is the core of the book. We first meet Arrowsmith as a medical student at the University of Winnemac; he gives up his scientific passion for a wife and general practice in the village of Wheatsylvania; he is stirred by the pretentious programme of public health, and becomes assistant and finally successor to Dr Pickerbaugh, Director of Public Health of Nautilus, Iowa. Driven forth by a citizenry justly indignant at his interference with business as usual, he turns to the McGurk Institute for medical research in New York. After fighting the bubonic plague in one of the lesser Antilles where his wife, Leora, dies, he returns to find the disinterested pursuit of truth as remote to the patrons and directors of McGurk as to the politicians of Nautilus, and takes refuge in a sort of hermitage of research among the Vermont hills.

In all this there is something of the conscientious thoroughness of Zola. Mr Lewis is determined to leave no stone of the medical

edifice unturned, and under each he finds human nature in reptilian form. Indeed, to reach the fraud of the commercial drug firm he is obliged to cut loose from the hero and follow the story of his teacher, Professor Gottlieb, on his way from Winnemac to McGurk. Undoubtedly in this occupational interest we miss something of the regional unity of Main Street and Babbitt. We do not know Mohalis, Wheatsylvania, and Nautilus as we do Gopher Prairie and Zenith. Toward the end of the book the social background of New York is hardly realized at all, and this is the chief reason why its entrance into Arrowsmith's life with his second marriage seems mere fiction. The essential truth of Arrowsmith's experience as medical student, country doctor, and director of public health, no physician will question. Even the preposterous Pickerbaugh, Director of Public Health of Nautilus, Iowa, is plausible enough to readers in New York and Chicago. Pickerbaugh revives the exuberant caricature of Babbitt. Besides his titular office he is "founder of the first Rotary Club in Iowa; superintendent of the Jonathan Edwards Congregational Sunday School of Nautilus; president of the Moccasin Ski and Hiking Club, of the West Side Bowling Club, and the 1912 Bull Moose and Roosevelt Club; organizer and cheer-leader of a Joint Picnic of the Woodmen, Moose, Elks, Masons, Oddfellows, Turnverein, Knights of Columbus, B'nai B'rith, and the Y. M. C. A.; and winner of the prizes both for reciting the largest number of biblical texts and for dancing the best Irish jig at the Harvest Moon Soirée of the Jonathan Edwards Bible Class for the Grown-ups," and author of such rhyming roads to health as

"Boil the milk bottles, or by gum  
You better buy your ticket to Kingdom Come."

All this is in Mr Lewis's best vein. When he conducts Arrowsmith to the McGurk laboratory we feel that he is on less firm ground. Here he is indebted to Dr Paul H. DeKruif for the inside stuff. The bacteriological detail is, of course, sound. Never before in fiction has the psychology of the scientist, the passion for research, been rendered with such penetration and justice. When, however, Arrowsmith in fighting the plague in St Hubert is bidden by his scientific conscience to divide the population into two parts,

one half to be inoculated with his phage, the other half to be refused in order absolutely to control the results of the experiment, we have either an example of scientific fanaticism or a piece of pure fiction. The phenomena of the plague have been sufficiently observed to make it practically certain that, if all who were inoculated under favourable circumstances survived, the remedy had been found—and probably half the population would have resisted inoculation anyway. This air of unreality hangs over the latter part of the book as Mr Lewis becomes more absorbed in his purpose. Leora's death, from smoking in the laboratory a half finished cigarette on which a maid had spilt a test-tube of germs, at the time when Martin is caressing another woman, is necessary to Mr Lewis's programme. This other woman, Joyce Lanyon, the symbol of the intrusion of the social world into the privacies of science, would be obnoxious were she not quite inconceivable. We suspect her, along with Capitola McGurk, Rippleton Holabird, and other inmates of the McGurk Institute, of being aimed at the people who have been annoying Dr DeKruif. As such they do not reach their mark.

Arrowsmith is an important step in the campaign to de-bamboozle the American public and relieve its institutions of bunk. Mr Lewis has attacked this old enemy in one of its highest places. In all phases of medicine—education, private and public practice, and finally research—he has revealed its pretensions and exposed its perpetrators. If he has sacrificed the reality of fiction, it is in the interest of the reality of a public cause which gives largeness of view and significance to Arrowsmith.

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT

## BRIEFER MENTION

**BLACK LAUGHTER**, by Llewelyn Powys (12mo, 216 pages, Harcourt, Brace: \$2.50). Among myriads of recently published books here is one that bears the authentic stamp of experience, a book that will live. Africa emerges vividly from it, with all its horrors, splendours, and smells. For the first time that land has been seen by an artist, and the amazing growths, both animal and vegetable, take terrifying proportions for which the previous reports of valorous explorers had not in the least prepared us. Mr Powys himself makes no pretence to valour. On the contrary, he sounds the note of fear on the very first page and repeats it incessantly, like the war-gong in Emperor Jones, and with due hypnotism upon the reader. An wholly extraordinary effect is produced by the juxtaposition of a civilized, sensitive modern with the barbarities of the ferocious tropics; and the style of the writing nobly matches the author's profoundly disturbing enquiries into the mysteries of life. It is in the best English tradition.

**THE QUIANT COMPANIONS**, by Leonard Merrick (12mo, 299 pages; Dutton: \$1.90) approaches the tragedy of racial miscegenation on the velvet paws of the story-teller; it has neither the artistic detachment of God's Stepchildren nor the intensity of O'Neill. The antagonism which arises from his study of a mixed marriage is so largely one of temperament that the fact of a clash in colour is crowded into the background, and Mr Merrick is once again immersed in the problem of the sensitive soul denied its free expression. This is a theme which the author never tires of, and the race complication becomes merely an accessory before the fact.

**ARNOLD WATERLOO**, by May Sinclair (12mo, 446 pages; Macmillan: \$2.50) is sound psychology, as is usual in May Sinclair's novels, but though her characters are living men and women they move in a world and a society singularly free from the *mores* that confine and mould most human conduct. It is a little beneath the art and intelligence of so gifted an author, to untangle a triangle by killing her heroine with a convenient attack of pneumonia. Having brought her hero to an impasse it is unfair to help him out; he was man enough to do it without Divine or Editorial assistance.

**THE BOY IN THE BUSH**, by D. H. Lawrence and M. L. Skinner (12mo, 388 pages, Thomas Seltzer: \$2.50). Raw material roughly handled. Life on the west coast of Australia forty years ago was doubtless crude enough, but it acquires no polish from the Lawrence touch. Numbers of the author's *fideles* dropped away from him with Kangaroo and the new book, though better, is not enough to win them back. There are flashes, perhaps one flash in each chapter, but occasional lucky phrases do not offset the vast reaches of careless writing.

**THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1924**, edited by Edward J. O'Brien (12mo, 367 pages; Small, Maynard: \$2.50) rounds out a decade of these valuable yearbooks, and leaves their editor with a sense of their predominant sadness—the fruit of the American fear of nonconformity. "Stop humiliating the immigrant and the artist," he says, "and with their aid we may begin to discover America." In the meantime, he garners the best of what there is—from youths like Roger Sergel and Glenway Wescott, from the middle ranks of Zona Gale and Floyd Dell, and from such veterans as Rupert Hughes and Gouverneur Morris. Most of them have substance, and a very few—among them notably Mr Wescott's *In a Thicket* which appeared in *THE DIAL*—have style. Perhaps the sadness which Mr O'Brien discerns is not so much due to the presence of fear as to the absence of joy.

**THE NATURE OF A CRIME**, by Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford (12mo, 108 pages; Doubleday, Page: \$2.50). The chief interest of this little volume is not the story. The story cannot be said to add much to the reputation of Mr Madox Ford and if it does not detract from the reputation of Conrad it is only because of the equivocal frankness in the Conrad preface. The chief interest of the book, putting aside the sardonic malice of the fourth chapter, lies in its value as a literary document throwing light upon the whole problem of collaboration in fiction. For those among us who still retain a tender if rather naïve penchant for the story named Romance it is suggestive to learn from this volume that Conrad "eliminated almost every word of action and eighty per cent of the conversations" by his collaborator.

**THREE FLIGHTS UP**, by Sidney Howard (12mo, 286 pages; Scribner: \$2) clicks into place as the better sort of fiction of the better sort of magazine—short stories of more than average competence and discernment. A Likeness of Elizabeth takes a fresh swing at the art-versus-dollars antagonism of New York life; genius confronted with the claims of affection and domestic adjustment makes its compromise. Transatlantic, which is an attempt to catch the rhythm of ocean life with its threads of superficial drama crossed in six-day intimacy, lacks a central point of interest and its effect is desultory. In Mrs Vietch: A Segment of Biography, the touch is sure; here is Mr Howard's narrative skill at its best. *The God They Left Behind Them* has elements of the sinister and the spectacular; the rest is machinery.

**THIS MAD IDEAL**, by Floyd Dell (12mo, 246 pages; Knopf: \$2) reveals the young generation shadow-boxing with the old. The older generation isn't even in the ring, but Mr Dell—who referees the match—counts it out just the same. Judith Valentine is one of those straight-limbed young idealists going about with a chip of freedom on her shoulder, daring the conventions to knock it off. She sees an enemy in every housebroken gesture; the mere mention of marriage causes her to lift her head like a startled deer. The author is lost in admiration of her, but in the end, the reader still has his compass. Judith emerges untamed, but—untested.



**PROFILES FROM HOME**, by Eunice Tietjens (12mo, 110 pages; Knopf: \$1.50). Turning over the casual word-vignettes of this small volume, cameo-pictures traced in no very polished clay, one cannot but feel that, given more time and more dramatic concentration, there is good sound grist for a bold unscrupulous poetic mill in the kindly and caustic sensibility that underlies these prose-poems. They make no arresting dint upon the reader's mind; but they take their place in the great uneven discordant chorus of voices such as are at least doing something to give an intelligible significance to the titanic litter and debris of the American scene.

**VICTORIAN POETRY**, by John Drinkwater (12mo, 236 pages; Doran: \$1.25). "There is now no new verse form to be discovered in English poetry. *Vers libre*, polyphonic prose and what not lack that charm which is peculiar to the infinity of recognized forms. No considerable poet ever found it irksome to work within these limitations, and nowadays only one who limits himself to inventing attractive little devices in the smaller things of technique, shall rank as a considerable poet. Whitman must be ignored. Though his poetry is new, it is not so good as it would be were it less new. He is not English, but American." Such is Mr Drinkwater's critical foundation; a false foundation. His discussion stands without it. It is not a complete discussion, for it neglects the nonsense verse of the period. But nothing could represent more completely all that James Harvey Robinson calls "open minded," and all that the editors of the series call "fresh appraisal."

**LIFE AND ART**, by Thomas Hardy (8vo, 140 pages; Greenberg: \$3.50). The scattered essays and fragments from Thomas Hardy's pen, collected and edited by Ernest Brennecke, Jr., are of a kind unexpectedly interesting. The article entitled *The Dorsetshire Labourer*, especially that portion of it describing the Candlemas hiring-season, when the carters and shepherds change their masters, has that tough, sly, weather-wise, practical astuteness, which in the great man's later and more metaphysical work has been often over-laid. The same cautious and tenacious life-craft can be enjoyed in the essay entitled *The Profitable Reading of Fiction*, a piece of sound, racy, unadorned common-sense, more germane to the heart of this great matter than many much more pretentious disquisitions. It is in the patient, laconic wisdom of these less dramatic lucubrations rather than in the "digs" at Maeterlinck and Nietzsche that this collection pleases us.

**THE POETRY OF ARCHITECTURE**, by Frank Rutter (12mo, 236 pages; Doran: \$1.25). St Mark's, Mr Rutter says, "is not strictly speaking a great work of art for it does not enshrine one generous, unselfish feeling or attain unity in the expression of a single noble idea." His book is an amusing illustration of the Anglo-Saxon mania for judging works of art by the criteria of ethics. Frequently, as in his search for the "secret origin" of the obelisk—which he finally interprets as "an expression of the yearning to attain height"—he is impeded by ignorance or prudery. He has made a Sunday school lesson of the history of an art.

**MY DEAR CORNELIA**, by Stuart P. Sherman (12mo, 281 pages; Atlantic Monthly Press: \$2.50). The only portion of this tedious and insipid book which could possibly arrest the attention of the most moderate intelligence is the portion entitled *The Idea of Chastity*; and *that* is only arresting as an example of how not to attack one's literary enemies and how not to betray the limitations of one's mind under the urge of the longing to be jocosely spiteful. "In reading," says Stuart P. Sherman, "the novels of Ben Hecht, Maxwell Bodenheim, Sherwood Anderson, Evelyn Scott, Waldo Frank and *James Joyce*," the italics are ours as we ponder upon this method of grouping names, "one's first impression is frequently of wonder as to what motive can prompt an author to perpetuate a record of experience so humiliatingly painful and a vision of souls so atrociously ugly." It must be at any rate a pleasant revenge for the writers thus indiscriminately lumped together to feel how completely clear that "motive" would be to Dante or to Swift; and how it will be destined to remain for ever obscure to Stuart P. Sherman.

**RED**, by Carl Van Vechten (12mo, 205 pages; Knopf: \$2.50) is made up of three parts of the ruddier juices of previous volumes and one part fresh wine squeezed from the musical grapes; it celebrates Mr Van Vechten's retirement from the vineyard. It deals with musical sound and critical fury—signifying modernity; Stravinsky should write music for the movies; Ornstein should play with his piano perched on a pushcart on Manhattan Bridge; Brahms should be listened to in a beer garden, and a song recitalist not at all. Jazz is, at present, the "only hope" of American music, but the author does not indicate whether it is a white hope—or a red.

**JOSEPH PULITZER**, by Don C. Seitz (illus., 8vo, 478 pages; Simon & Schuster: \$5) is the biography of a great journalist for whom "not property but politics" was the abiding passion. The success and the stunts of the New York World make a good story, and Mr Seitz has told it in an agreeable way; he does better with the better story of Pulitzer himself and his blindman's vigil over the paper and the principles he loved. Those who are interested in Americana of the past fifty years will find additional fascinations in the picture of old Saint Louis and recent New York.

**THE RHYMING DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**, by John Walker, revised and enlarged, with preface and introduction to index of allowable rhymes, by Lawrence H. Dawson (12mo, 549 pages; Dutton: \$3.50). With Mr Dawson's expository preface, an appended index to rhymes introduced by sagely careful comment, with cautionary asterisks, cross references, and Table of Divisions, *The Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* published by John Walker in 1775, comes to us enlarged and rewritten throughout. For these 54,000 words grouped as originally, in accordance with the reversed spelling of the word, not only "songsters," Sunday paper acrostic enthusiasts, and "schoolmasters" in search of derivatives, but fanatics of cadence, may well accord with Lord Byron and The New York Public Library, in offering the authors fervent thanks.



**MASTERS OF MODERN ART: CÉZANNE**, by Tristan L. Klingsor; **RENOIR**, by François Fosca; **MONET**, by Camille Mauclair; **GAUGUIN**, by Robert Rey (12mo, Dodd, Mead: \$1.75 each volume). To the layman befuddled by the intricacies of modernist painting, this new series of monographs should bring intelligent guidance and encouragement. The texts are descriptive rather than aesthetic, but each of the four critics has written an entertaining and authoritative biography, and has incorporated into the life of his hero a simple exposition of technical methods, and a good deal of appreciation that is unassailable as far as it goes. The translators have done their work faithfully, and the collotype reproductions are of unusual beauty.

**A HISTORY OF FRENCH ETCHING**, by F. L. Leipnik (4to, 214 pages; 106 plates; Dodd, Mead: \$12.50). An Englishman of infinite leisure and great love for "the artists' art" has investigated the lives and processes of every French etcher from Callot to Marie Laurencin, and has assembled his detailed results in a book that is more distinguished physically than critically. A survey of the reproductions discloses that France has not been particularly rich in etchers, that most of the plates are symptomatic of good taste rather than originality, and that Charles Meryon is the outstanding genius in this finical medium.

**EUROPEAN LITERATURE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**, by Benedetto Croce, translated by Douglas Ainslie (8vo, 373 pages; Knopf: \$6). While this work, the digest of an enormous amount of reading, might serve very well as a manual of reference on the twenty-five writers it discusses (indicating as it does the salient quality of each author dealt with) it is much more important by reason of the unprejudiced curiosity which Signor Croce brings to his subject. Here we are spared the minor flatteries of either iconoclasm or traditionalism, and given instead the more stable enjoyment of an independent generalizing mind corrected by much native taste.

**ETHICS, ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT**, by Prince Kropotkin, translated by Louis S. Friedland and Joseph R. Piroshnikoff (8vo, 349 pages; Lincoln MacVeagh, Dial Press: \$4). A survey of ethical systems in the light of the author's own contribution to the subject. His basic contention is that man has a social instinct which is even more pronounced than his egotistic one, and that this leads to a sense of justice, which in turn becomes a positive moral drive. This amounts practically to the assumption of a moral sense (a concept common to present-day anthropology, and reached inductively) over against the deductive philosophic procedure (eudemonism) of seeing morality as an outgrowth of enlightened egotism. Yet Kropotkin himself admits that such a moral sense, when gratified, gives pleasure to the individual, so that his theories might be considered as another angle of approach to the inevitable eudemonism. Kropotkin was prevented by death from writing the dialectic aspects of his theories, but this preparatory volume states his issues adequately, while the vivid recapitulation of previous moral teachings gives the work a high documentary value.

## THE THEATRE

IT is seldom that events move so swiftly to justify a critic as they did immediately after my cold-blooded plea for a jazz ballet (instead of a jazz symphony as in *PROCESSIONAL* or a jazz opera as in the newspapers). *SOONER AND LATER*, produced at The Neighborhood Playhouse, is so close to my specifications, and so successful artistically, that I feel a warm glow of personal pride in it.

It is a "dance satire" on a scenario by Irene Lewisohn, with music by Emerson Whithorne, directed by the writer of the scenario and with settings and costumes by Donald Mitchell Oenslager. Of the three acts I found the tribal scene "with its vital rhythms and elemental human emotion" so close to the *SACRE* in choreography that I began snooping about for Strawinsky in the score and of course found him, although I would not now swear that he is there, nor would I say it is important either way. For in the second act the whole event moved forward with a tremendous stride and Mr Whithorne moved to the top of the class among those who are writing American music. The setting of this was fantastic, a traffic tower leaning dizzily backward, a platform which was a subway train, a news-stand with its magazine covers illuminated so erratically that the rhythm of the flashes was jazz. American workmen did American jobs, nervously. Then they went to an elaborate burlesque of American entertainment, with Mr Ziegfeld's cold ladies and Mr Anderson's Spanish dancers, and a lot of jazz babies. Some of this burlesque was a little long, but all of it was pointed, and all the more pointed by the contrast, in music and choreography, with the earlier part of the scene. The third act was in the future, crystalline and geometric, with a glance from the future back to our present in a trivial melodrama without actors. It was all strange and interesting and intelligent. The middle act, and especially the first half of it, was the real thing in jazz ballet; not the only thing, but one form of the genuine. It proved a handful of theses, not the least of which is that in jazz America can find an artistic expression of a little of itself.

I am not sure that this was intended to be, even in part, a jazz ballet; to make the name clear let me say that it could not have

been constructed if America were other than it is, and that the music could not have been written by one who had not listened, intelligently, to the American music of the past fifteen years.

The opening of the new Guild Theatre was, naturally, much more of an event than the Theatre Guild's production of *CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA*. The performance I saw was a dress rehearsal, and one of the few of that name which, under the aegis of the Guild, needed the apology. I cannot, therefore, criticize it entire; but from the reports of later performances I gather that some things persisted, among them the choked utterance of Lionel Atwill, Helen Hayes's occasional indulgence in the wrong kind of coyness, and Helen Westley's sinister Ftatateeta, well played in general, but unfortunately looking too much like Fannie Brice with the Chief after her. *CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA* is one of Shaw's noble plays; you cannot in reading it miss the intellectual exaltation and the poetic feeling any more than you can miss the satire and rapid mental play. It seems to call for the swiftest action, the merest suggestion of the sumptuous, and to allow, in such conditions, for changes of pace into the languor of Egypt, the rush of violence, and a few flights of "the slow arrow of beauty." Mr Moeller's ideas were different and might have been proved right if he had overcome the physical obstacles, if his players and his scene-shifters had both been able to work more promptly. He had, after all, a new prologue (which I disliked because it was superfluous) to give him the keynote; the prologue had a false front of nobility and a clever wit, and proves, as the *ST JOAN* epilogue proved, that Shaw is a great dramatist, but an indifferent preacher. The prologue diminished nobility, in the approved Shavian manner; but one mustn't take a playwright's analyses of his own characters too seriously. Shaw's Caesar is a greater human being than Shakespeare's; it's no use pretending he isn't great because he has a bald head.

The theatre itself is the Guild's outward symbol of achievement, and it is superb. It is a beautiful, and not arty, place of entertainment; it is not a temple of the drama, it is a theatre. And as it arises after some seven years, it naturally calls for a summary of the Guild's work in that time. I have myself accused the Guild of various things, but its sentimentality about the theatre, which annoyed me, has not been in evidence for the past two years, and

if the directors of the Guild want to grow sentimental about their new building, I will not blame them. The glory of the new house in an odd way makes clearer the Guild's intentions. It was never, except for a few private performances, an experimental theatre; it held all along that a play should be produced for a comparatively large number of playgoers; it required of itself to be self-supporting. Those who wished the Guild to be the Provincetown Players (of yesterday or to-day) were simply confusing their own desires with the Guild's manifest destiny which was to produce intelligent plays in an intelligent manner.

The half dozen theatrical managers in New York who now live on the audiences which the Guild created are the best testimony of the Guild's success, better proof even than the Guild's ability to keep *PROCESSIONAL* alive for weeks beyond its assumed power of resistance. Nearly everything possible in the commercial theatre this year and impossible a decade ago, is due to the Guild. And because of that service the Guild is the one producer which should be held unsparingly to account for every deviation from its own artistic integrity. It not only can bear the harshest criticism; it is entitled to it.

An exquisite production of Congreve's *LOVE FOR LOVE* has been turned into a box-office success, I am told, by the ravings of one or two critics concerning its obscenity. (I do not allude to Mr Broun who knows that the play is bawdy and likes it.) Mr Belasco, with his fine taste in titles will no doubt soon present *'TIS A PITY SHE'S A WHORE*; but I shall persist in believing that Robert Edmond Jones cared for the play and for the wit of the play and had a profound feeling for its style, and so produced the work. It is a gratification to listen to English as Congreve wrote it, to hear the delicate grating of sword on sword in each *riposte* of the conversation. As you read Congreve (without any technique of the stage to guide you) the characters seem often "in the air," even as in reading the Elizabethans whole subplots seem disengaged from the matter of the play. It was the director's work to enmesh the conversation delicately into the drama, chiefly by pointing the relations between the characters. Mr Jones has succeeded superbly. Everything shone in a bright artificial light and everything threw off a shimmer.

GILBERT SELDES

## MODERN ART

THERE has been very little comment in *THE DIAL* upon the activities of the National Academy of Design and no evidence upon the part of the readers of *THE DIAL* that this sin of omission has been greatly deplored. In fact the interest in the Academy is not intense. There has been a tendency to regard the aged officers of the aged institution as harmless, and they have been permitted to amuse themselves after their fashion without interference. One of their latest moves, however, does constitute a danger to society at large, and Mr Forbes Watson of *The Arts* is to be congratulated upon the force and courage with which he combats it. It seems that in honour of its one hundredth birthday the Academy has decided upon a "drive" for \$6,000,000, with which to make itself more important than it has hitherto been. Since the war, and because of the war tradition, all "drives" have been immune from criticism, and however unsympathetic our citizens may be to the particular cause that is being pushed, they all prepare, each time, to contribute "until it hurts." In view of this Mr Watson deserves all the more credit for nailing this new assault upon the public innocence. The principal points Mr Watson makes, and it seems to me they cannot be too widely published and considered, are these:

"For a long time the National Academy has been losing ground. Its position in the art world is the position of an institution which wishes to censor the art of a free people, that, let us hope, does not want to have its art censored. Of course, the avowed purpose of the censorship which the Academy exercised as long as it could, is educational, but the real purpose, if we penetrate below all the high-sounding words about educational expansion, is to increase the market for Academic work, to control, as far as possible, the education of art students in order to bring them up in the Academic way, to control as far as possible the exhibition system throughout the country, a system already pretty well controlled by the National Academy, and to attempt, by an appearance of disinterest and a self-righteous statement, to put itself

forward as a national institution with no other object in view than to encourage American art.

"When the National Academy speaks of its 'responsibility' as a 'national institution,' of course it infers that it is actually a national institution, that there is something officially national about it, whereas it is simply a private institution, which works primarily for the benefit of its members and incidentally to gain power. When it speaks of the demands made upon it 'for greater service to the public' it ignores the fact that the present galleries in New York where the National Academy holds its semi-annual exhibitions, are too large. For the Academy no longer attracts many first-rate works. To fill the galleries it is compelled to accept a mediocre collection of pictures and sculpture. The censoring habits of the Academy have long since taught the men of individual force, except two or three of the older men, not to send their work to the Academy exhibitions. The best painters in America to-day, under forty, have no affiliations with the Academy, and do not exhibit in the Academy exhibitions."

When one thinks for a minute of the immense impetus that could be given American life by merely spending the income of \$6,000,000 in the purchase of contemporary American art, the absurdity becomes apparent of handing such a sum of money over to a set of fossils who cannot recognize art when they see it; and who would probably blow most of it in on needless buildings and paraphernalia.

The Elie Nadelman sculptures in the Scott and Fowles Galleries might have aroused more excitement in another age than this. They seemed to point two ways at once, backward and forward, and when opposing points of view are endorsed with equal enthusiasm by a clever artist the public is apt to rebel at the enforced thinking that is necessary in order to come to a choice. There was no rebellion in this instance. We refused to stir from the apathy into which we have fallen of late, and did not think at all. We calmly divided into two ranks, the one half of us liking Mr Nadelman's return to classicism and the other half preferring the caricatures in wood of modern society. The two factions ignored each other quite, and did not come into collision, which was a pity,



for a clash of ideas, any ideas, might have wakened us up a bit. Neither side accused the artist of having off moments, or being partly woozy. There is, in reality, no ground for supposing Mr Nadelman to be baiting his public. Both divisions of his art have been tormenting him for years, and both, apparently, must have expression. He was recognized from the first as being enormously proficient, and the necessity to carry his workmanship further and further has got him at last to the point where the glittering method absolutely distracts one from any thought of the theme. Even the marbles are carried beyond the sense of being marble, and as far as the eye can see, these figures might just as well be glossy porcelains. That may be the precise reason why those who loved them did so, for there are many who never relish porcelains, for instance, until a potter learns how to give them a semblance of linen; or ironwork unless it resembles silk; but be that as it may, the moneyed success of the show, I'm told, was with these shiny statues of far-away Greek goddesses. For my part, I preferred the caricatures in wood. As far as sheer cleverness is concerned they topped anything shown this winter. They were so astonishingly skilful that an up-to-date sceptic who refuses to believe there is anything super-human save a machine had a moment's wild suspicion that some new kind of machinery must have carved out their perfections. But industrious investigation has not been rewarded as yet with a hint of the process, so at this writing, we must continue to assume that Mr Nadelman relied upon knives and sandpaper for his jokes upon New York humanity. A few hardy collectors bought some of these carvings, which is greatly to our credit, though it would have been still more creditable, had all of them been hastily snatched up. I thought these effigies of plump hostesses and dancers and pianists—Mr Nadelman seems to think us all plump without exception—could be immensely decorative in the right hands.

HENRY McBRIDE

## MUSICAL CHRONICLE

OF course, one knew it bound to happen, that on a day what came from Europe would not longer reward, and what was produced by American hands would interest chiefly. But the date always had mystical futurity. Twenty-five years hence; fifty years hence. In moments of despond, and placing the term of one's life at an hundred, it was the hour before Abraham's bosom. Yet here, during the last few months, has dawned the morning of Der Tag: Europe pretty well under the eastern horizon, and, all about, in broadest light, American work. It simply gives nothing, what they send, or, better, we import. Not because one wills it so. But go yourself, and hear and see, and say whether you are not bored. Take Hindemith, Germany's all-Aryan musical wonder, he of whom Strauss enquired, "But since you have talent, why do you write atonally?" (One took the blow, and yet, and yet—). Men saw across 'cello-strings, blow flutes, sound triangles. Forms come which resemble the parts of the older music. Nonetheless, say that it is music, if you can, a necessary moving thing! Say whether it is not poor Max Reger all over again, made and not begotten! Then, Malipiero: Sette Canzoni. Assuredly, a great refinement over Maestro Giacomo Puccini dei Ricordi. Venetian in its sumptuousity. But had you not heard it, would you have been much the poorer for an experience? And it is not alone their music that is stale. Their literature too. Here comes Cocteau with his *Secret Professionnel*, latest distillation of the elixir of art. Most of *that* was said by Picabia at 291 ten years ago: calling not Bouguereau and Saint-Saëns, but Cézanne, Mallarmé, and Rimbaud the *pompier*s of to-day. And then as if Cocteau hadn't his *pompier*s à lui: Picasso, Strawinsky, Satie, and others.

In the theatre, the same. Michael Auclair, better called Chocolate Eclair, is introduced as a sublimation of French wine, cookery, and loving, and bless us if it is not our own little Pollyanna!

Then turn to the American experimenters. There you will find the daring, the sureness of feeling the Europeans *en masse* no longer show. No European is using the abstract properties of paint as absolutely as Arthur Dove. And during years the Euro-



pean pioneersmen were playing with bits of common material, striving to turn them plastic, and never getting free; then Dove comes along with a few sticks, dead leaves, shells, and forms them into an aspiringly lyric thing.

Should you require further assurance of the fact that we have become intellectually self-sufficient, that we are drawing ahead on our own road of expression, and that for the present Europe has nothing more to give us, pray look at the incomprehension European critics have for us. Only give a British man of letters *A Story-Teller's Story* for review: then mark the good fellow's incapacity to appreciate the story and the manner. That is the way men have always behaved before experiences beyond them; and that is the situation of the Europeans before what the Americans are doing to-day.

Quite comprehensible our old friends should have fallen a little behind! And no blame to them for recovering no sooner. But it cannot be avoided that what has happened is this: the Europeans in their exhaustion have taken to striving to create art. They have classicism, cubism, unanimism, and other dogmas ever before them, guiding them by their charming lights. But the American workers begin with what they know of the truth, and subordinate all else to that. The American painters, for example, have no use for the word cubism. For the reason that their abstractions and their representations are identical. We have in mind especially Georgia O'Keeffe. Hence the efforts to graft European conceptions onto the American workers—mysticism, intellectualism, aestheticism—and to give the American effort a conscious tendency, has proven so abortive. Its apparent indirection, experimentalism, fluidity is the strength of the American psyche. Gods, fifty more years of such wandering! Meanwhile, it is important that all of us should realize immediately what the situation is, and misapply no more of our too-slender resources.

PAUL ROSENFELD

## ANNOUNCEMENT

WITH this issue for June 1925 we complete the eleventh volume of the monthly *DIAL*. When at the close of the year 1919 Dr Watson and I assumed the liabilities and the direction of what had hitherto been a fortnightly journal, we did so with the joint intention of establishing in America a monthly magazine which should be devoted exclusively, and in the most general sense, to art and letters. Not only did we have in mind no literary or artistic propaganda, no desire to urge, for example, the advantages of free verse as opposed to regular (or of regular as opposed to free), but also we depended upon no aesthetic system either of our own or of another to guide us in selecting what should be the contents of *THE DIAL*. We did not, and do not, deem that it is feasible, in aesthetic matters, to judge by reference to any detailed theoretic code.

The fact is, in taking over *THE DIAL*, we set out together from the mere recognition, shared by both, of the absence hereabouts of any regular publication much interested in bringing out the sort of writing we liked to read and the sort of pictures we liked to see. I doubt whether it is ever speculatively possible to convince a temperament radically different from one's own of any real inferiority in the taste of that temperament. On the other hand, it is easy speculatively (and practically) to believe in one's own superiority. Confronted with Mr Munsey and *The Century Magazine* we were not convinced that our inability to take satisfaction in the periodical provender so abundantly tendered us was due to any shortcoming in ourselves. So it seemed worth while to set up a journal where we and others of our way of feeling and of thinking could sit at ease; and might, when the stars should be auspicious, perhaps encounter moments of delight. And then, of course, we knew people whose work was not getting published and whose work we thought the public should at least have a chance at. And then, as an obvious corollary thereto, we thought these people entitled to at least the little support we could give them.

All this, in different words, and in editorial comment as well as in *DIAL* advertisements, I have already written. I resume it here

because the resumption of an innocent ambition must always be, in this world, novel. And because a change (although indeed I believe it to be in this instance an inessential change) is, beginning with the next issue of *THE DIAL*, to take place in the direction of this paper.

The fact that Dr Watson and I were possessed of no fast aesthetic dogma made the personality of those members of the *DIAL* staff who were to pass upon manuscript and pictures the decisive factor in the contents and, indeed, in the whole life of the magazine. Since I have always shared with Dr Watson the responsibility of examining and of choosing manuscripts and pictures for *THE DIAL*, and since I am now withdrawing from this most central part of the editorial work, I take this occasion to give the record of this aspect of the direction of *THE DIAL*. For most of the five and a half years of our joint control, Dr Watson, as Publisher, and I, as Editor, have alone been responsible for the contents of our pages. But Mr Stewart Mitchell, during the time in which he was, so happily for us, our Managing Editor, shared with us in this work. And Miss Alyse Gregory, who for the past year and a half has so eminently filled the same difficult position, has likewise shared this crucial work. Mr Gilbert Seldes, the other of our three Managing Editors, did not share, except as good counsellor, in this onerous duty. His remarkable talents were quite sufficiently employed in his double task of meeting the daily crises of managing-editorship and the monthly crises of dramatic criticism.

Miss Gregory now resigns, much to our regret, the office of Managing Editor. She accompanies her husband to live in England. And I myself am also leaving America, and for an indefinite period. And I desire to take advantage of this fact to seek out a little leisure to try to write for that journal of which I am, after all, the Editor. So, although I retain my editorial office and shall be consulted on all points of general policy, I and Dr Watson have now found it necessary to appoint, for the time of my absence, what we have decided to call an Acting Editor. This Acting Editor will then include among her duties, in addition to those of Managing Editor, many of those hitherto belonging to the Editor himself. In particular, she will be associated with Dr Watson in determining the contents of the magazine.

We consider ourselves extremely fortunate in having persuaded Miss Marianne Moore to be, beginning with the next issue of *THE DIAL*, our Acting Editor. And it is because I feel so much sympathy with the work and with the point-of-view of Miss Marianne Moore that I do not regard this change in the direction of *THE DIAL*, howsoever at the core, as requiring the use of the word 'essential.'

Perhaps I should add that I intend to retain control (with Dr Watson) for the rest of this calendar year of the pictures in *THE DIAL*. Afterward Miss Moore will assume the lead in this matter also. But the choice of the coloured frontispieces, as well as the determination of the *DIAL* Award, and indeed any appointment to regular collaboration in *THE DIAL* (as, for example, that which I am now able to announce, that of Maxim Gorki to be our Russian Correspondent), will, like many other such less detailed matters, continue to be referred to Dr Watson and myself.

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